jeevadhara

A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

Reforming Higher Education

Edited by:
Felix Wilfred

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Editorial

To keep knowledge secret as a privilege of a few has been an Indian trait that dies hard. Historically this has cost the exclusion of a large number of people – especially lower castes and classes from access to education. Modernity has opened the doors of education for all. Today India has perhaps the most numerous institutions of higher education in the world. And yet, when it comes to quality, innovation and creativity, the system is lagging far behind the developed world, and even China and many other Asian countries. The same kind of elitism that characterized the past is being practiced in more subtle and sophisticated ways, thanks to the hierarchical caste mindset. Caste is like the proverbial cat that has nine lives; it continues to reappear in new avatars also in modernity and its systems, including education.

The legitimate aspiration for higher education has made it impossible for the state to respond in adequate ways. Therefore, we witness the increasing number of private providers of education coming into the scene. Education becomes a tradable good and profit becomes the primary goal. This has created another set of problems which the country is facing.

We could go on enumerating the various issues affecting higher education today. However to be able to address these questions, there needs to be an overarching and clear national vision, a vision of education that is oriented to the community and its wellbeing. Education is a common good. This should precede all other motives and considerations, and should serve as a guiding principle.

Realizing the importance of reforming higher education today, Asian Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies organized a national conference on the theme of *"Rethinking Higher Education Today: Transformation of Practices, Policies and Institutions"*. Selected papers are being published in this issue of *Jeevadhara* so as to bring some of the fruits of

the conference to the benefit of the readers of our journal. Included here are the keynote address of Dr M. Anandakrishnan and the presidential address of Dr G. Viswanathan.

Viswanathan argues for the need of more private institutions of higher education to meet the growing demand. Therefore, the state, instead of putting hurdles in the way of private institutions, should encourage and support them. Anandakrishnan, on the other hand, looks at the matter from the perspective of reforms that need to be effected which applies also to the private sector. He argues for the need of check and control on these institutions, given their commercial orientation. Further, the fact that the private institutions make available higher education to more people does not mean automatically that they are accessible. Suresh Kumar deals with the monitoring of private institutors with reference to Yashpal Committee Report. Nirmala Jeyaraj highlights the importance of networking in higher education today, and the benefits the various institutions could derive by cooperating together and sharing resources. India is one of the countries that spend least amount of GDP for education. Semmalar Selvi, on her part, raises the question of budget allocation and shows how under liberalization, there has been a decline in the state-funding for higher education, which in turn has affected the plight of Dalit students among whom enrolment is already very low. My own contribution deals with Christian colleges, their plight today and the innovation and leadership they could give for higher education in the present-day condition.

I wish to thank all the contributors for their insightful essays. All of them reworked their texts of the conference very carefully for this publication. Flora has been a great support in organizing the conference. She also assisted me in contacting the authors for reworking their contributions as well as in the final editing of this issue of Jeevadhara. I wish to express my high appreciation for her efficiency and sincere thanks for all her helps.

I hope these essays will help the readers to reflect critically on higher education in the country today, and trigger new ideas, proposals and policies that will benefit the entire community.

Felix Wilfred

Concerns in Higher Education Reforms

M. Anandakrishnan

The author of this contribution is the Chairman of IIT Kanpur, and former Vice-Chancellor, Anna University. As an academic, educator, administrator and as someone who has chaired different educational committees in the central and state governments, and has influenced significantly the educational policies in the country, the author brings into his reflections here a wide range of experiences. He reflects on three major areas in which higher education would require urgent reform: Academic reform, structural reform and regulatory reform. Each of these areas he develops with apt examples and illustrations. He sets these reforms in context.

Reform is a continuous process. If you think of a society without reform, that society is certainly dormant and static. Reforms have been taking place almost in every sector of human activity for hundreds, and probably thousands of years. Religions have changed or reformed themselves. Market structures have reformed and new ones have come into existence. New social policies have been formulated. Reform happens under certain demanding circumstances.

The Context of Reforms

1   When there is a great deal of oppression and suffering in the society, then you think of reform. Some of the difficult situations arise in the field of higher education with a whole range of   problems, limitations and constraints. Once you realize the consequences of

these problems, it is the right time to think of a reform. We cannot just go on let things take care of themselves. There are expectations that the Central and State Governments should do something about the deficiencies of higher education. I think that, besides the Central and State Governments, the society as a whole must be concerned about reform. The reforms need to take place through a consultative process, and not by diktats.

2.   We note a lot of changes taking place around us. For example, there is a new market structure, development of new technologies, new methods of teaching and learning, new job opportunities, new generation of learners, and so on. I think you have to undertake reform in such a way that you take maximum advantage of all the three developments - technological development, market development, and skill development.

3.   The third situation refers to global factors and forces on which we do not have control. Things happening in Libya, USA, Korea and elsewhere affect us, and we understand that in the field of economics when there is growth, recession and fluctuation of markets. The recent economic recession has affected the whole world especially the job markets. Our exports are affected. Hence there is a need to relate the higher education system to these changes as well as to capture the essence of global innovations in higher education.

These, then, are the three situations under which reforms in Higher Education need to take place.

   a) Academic Reform
   b) Structural Reform
   c) Regulatory Reform

There is a great deal of change in the knowledge system, in the skill domain; and in the attitudes and values of new generations. In academic reform it is important to think of all these different factors. If students go to University just because parents doll out money to get a

seat, then their value system is already poisoned. If thousands and thousands of such students wind their way through into the higher education system, the whole educational environment is poisoned. We have to ponder as to what kind of reform can prevent such a situation.

Academic Reforms

Holistic Approach and Trans-disciplinarity

If an engineer is corrupt, probably a building or roof will collapse. If higher education system in general is corrupted, then the whole society for generations to come will be poisoned. It will be like burning the root of a tree. So, I think we need to provide, as Felix Wilfred mentioned, for foundations of knowledge. Every child to the extent possible must have an exposure to Maths, Science, Humanities, Arts, Languages, Culture, Heritage, History, Information system, Inter-disciplinarity and Trans-disciplinarity. One may wonder if all of these are possible. I think if you treat this as our educational culture, this would certainly be possible. The Macaulay system of education in our country made our education system compartmentalized. If you are a physicist, you cannot study chemistry; a chemistry student cannot study biology; a biology student cannot study economics. If you are an economist you cannot study electronics. Today, in the society, most of the actions are taking place in the interface of disciplines, and not in narrow compartments. We should have the foundations laid right from the school education stage through the college and university. We need to design knowledge foundation system that exposes a child to the pleasures of knowing as many disciplines as possible.

Meta-Knowledge and Problem-Solving Skills

I need to mention here meta-knowledge, which is very important. Even if you have all the knowledge in science, mathematics, engineering, physics etc, you will still be wanting if you do not have problem solving capability. Unfortunately, most of the curriculum we have do not enable this. You go to a laboratory and you repeat the experiment that was done ten years ago by somebody else. We should take the student to be

intelligent enough to read the handbook and manuals so as to run an experiment. The approach should be to assign problems to the students to be solved with whatever tools are available in the laboratory. The problem-solving capability can be cultivated irrespective of the field of knowledge - whether it is mathematic, physics or other sciences including social sciences. The student should be able to understand the nature of the problem that remains to be solved. There may not be an immediate answer, but the search for answer needs to continue.

Communication Ability and Leadership

Communication ability is also very important. Large numbers of students are not able to structure their ideas in a cohesive, coherent manner and present them to different audience. There is a certain context-oriented communication capability. Unfortunately, this has been totally neglected in our system. Collaborative working which requires communication and exchange is largely absent in India. Generally, the collaborative culture is missing in a protective and secretive environment.

Leadership too is very important. Now, particularly academic leadership is at a great premium. In some State-funded universities, people have become Vice-Chancellors by bribing their way through. It is a very shameful phenomenon. But how do you punish the politician or the governor who receives money for appointments? I could name a large number of Vice-Chancellors whom I would not employ even as a lecturer! Fortunately, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has now brought out a new regulation. It says a Vice-Chancellor must have held a professor level   position at least for 10 years. UGC also said that every University must advertise the posts. Selection should be made from candidates who have made quality publications. If there are no strict criteria we will get people who went to jail or about to go there.

I have seen in some private universities people who have graduated with a bachelor's degree, and within three months made Vice-Chancellor of the university. How could such persons give academic leadership? A Vice-Chancellor must be a person who should be the ultimate academic symbol, respected by his or her colleagues. I think in the academic field

there is a leadership crisis in the country. The autonomy of universities is dependent on non interference from government in State Institutions and by the family members in private institutions. Persons who value academic dignity and professional respect will not accept leadership of institutions with high degree of external interference, no matter how high the salary is.

Continuous Learning and Mentoring

Life-long learning is very important. There is no finality to the education we are providing. The degree is not the end of education. It is only the beginning. The students must be told that the college or university covers only the syllabus because it is in our structure or regulations etc. They must also be told that within a couple of years only 25% or 30% may be valid; the rest could become useless. The students must be told to keep abreast of the developments in knowledge taking place in the world. If you want to be creative and innovative you have to keep on learning.

Unlike the time I passed B.E degree in 1952 from Guindy Engineering College, the nature and variety of knowledge have undergone revolutionary transformation. Though the quantum of study materials was very small in my student days, the teachers took personal interest in each and every student to mentor his future career, in spite of the limited domain of professional opportunities confined only to the government sector. They assessed the potential capabilities of individual students. One of my professors insisted that I should go for a Ph.D, and in 1956 he sent me to get admission in a University in Minnesota, USA. The teacher-student interaction should be such that it contributes to the growth of the student in every respect and lays the foundation for his or her future.

Unfortunately, a large part of our higher education both in public and private institutions has become what Dr. Manmohan Singh calls "conveyor-belt" system. Like a soda bottle, the student goes through the path of the conveyor belt and coached out of the university or college as an end-product. A lot of private colleges admit students after receiving

heavy capitation fees and for lack of competent teachers abandon them to private tuition and coaching centres.

Humanistic Knowledge and Social Sensitivity

Humanistic knowledge is very important in the field of education today. Children who come out of the educational institutions must possess life-coping skills, job-skills, and social sensitivity. Persons coming out of educational institutions are not sensitive to the problems of the society, because they have not been introduced to them in an intellectual atmosphere in a university. Social sensitivity relates to real world problems, helps development of emotional maturity, as well as ethical and moral attitudes.

Quality Enhancement and Accreditation

Now let us turn to quality enhancement. As part of the Academic reform, issues relating to Quality Assessment and Accreditation are in the centre stage. This phenomenon is gaining serious attention not only in India but also in most other countries of the developing world. How do we do quality enhancement? On this question, there is a big debate going on in the country.

For quality enhancement, accreditation is mandatory in every country. In India we have nearly 500 Universities and about 30000 colleges. How would we know about the quality of education in each of them? You cannot go by flashy advertisements or by propaganda. There must be some way of independently assessing these institutions.

There was a time when we associated quality education with fancy buildings, nice structures, nice fittings and so on. But along with good infrastructure, we also need to look at the teaching and learning processes that are adopted in these institutions. Again, teaching and learning process is not a matter of using power-points, slides, computer programmes and so on. Are the teachers interacting with the students? Do the teachers recognize the differences and individual capacities of each of their students? Are they able to identify that a student has got a better aptitude for a particular discipline and they encourage that student to take more

electives in the related areas or give him or her challenging assignments? Again, the teaching -learning process is not simply coming to the classes and delivering the lecturers or giving a bunch of notes, but it is about creating the maturity of mind in the student.

Along with adequate facilities and innovative teaching and learning process, it is necessary to assess the outcome. This is the end result. It is all about the kind of a person that you produced or graduated out of your institution. How good is this person in terms of coping with life? How good is this person in fitting to the job- needs? Again, outcome will be judged by people who are the employers or the people who take you for higher education or people who give you responsibilities. What kind of personality, attitude, and morality do the students coming out of institutions possess? How well are the alumni doing? These are some of the questions that need to be raised and answered.

Some Parameters of Current Reforms

Now I think the current reform initiatives have one set of interrelated objectives: expansion, access, equity and quality. Yes. Expansion is very important and it is necessary. We have to expand in private sectors, public sectors, and joint sectors. Foreign educational institutions are coming in here.

But expansion of higher education system - as Dr Felix Wilfred mentioned -is not simply for filling up of the seats. Expansion is not merely to take care of the growing pressure for admission. Expansion of higher educational opportunities should be viewed as a key factor for social and economic development of the country. That is why the government of India is giving a very high priority to education, after Dr Manmohan Singh took over as Prime Minister. Previously education used to be only at the periphery.

The products that come out of the institutions should be viewed as social and economic assets. They are going to transform this society economically and socially. I agree that expansion increases access. But access does not automatically ensure equity. You may have a large number of public and private colleges to go to, but this does not mean

everyone will have access to them. They may be denied access due to social, financial or other factors. I was shocked to see in Adyar, a long queue in the morning for admitting children for pre-kinder garten, paying cash of 1.5 lakhs. So you may have private and public schools, but you have neither access nor equity.

These days, many people seem to think that you cannot create a good rural school with high excellence. I think that is nonsense. Provided people are committed, I think, you can create quality institution in any environment. In our study, after the common entrance test was abolished, we were quite impressed by the number of people who were coming from backward classes, rural areas and from Tamil medium. Earlier, they were all thought to be unfit to enter engineering colleges because they could not go through the coaching classes for the entrance tests. Now, students from Tamil medium are also coming with the same degree of self-confidence as those from English medium, who were previously dominating.

Structural Reforms

Structural reforms in governing systems are important issues in today's higher education. I am not looking at it in terms of ranks and positions within a hierarchy. University, in the words of Dr Radhakrishnan or Jawaharlal Nehru, is a place of excitement, place of critical thinking, place of debate, place to argue, place to discuss and not just guided by some minister or the sons and sons-in-law of family owned institutions as to what to teach, and how to teach. So, structural reform is all about autonomy, accountability and interference effect.

I think politicians have now found that educational institutions are their best play ground. What do they do? In the government institutions they fix prices for the positions. If you want to be a Vice-Chancellor, lecturer, assistant professor, there is a price. Not only that, when the selection is taking place, P.A to the minister, or governor calls and asks, "what happened to the names I gave"! This is one side of the picture.

On the other side, what many - if not all - private universities do is to allocate seats for the ministers or politicians or bureaucrats depending

on the power and influence they wield. They are least bothered to see whether these seats reach the right candidates. There is no ethics. The speaker before me mentioned that people are going to China, Ethiopia and East European countries for higher education. What else can they do? Today, if a student has to get an MBBS seat, he or she needs to pay 45 lakhs and a PG medical seat costs 1 to 1.5 crores that too in cash – which becomes black money. In addition, they have to pay regular fees some time inflated by imaginary demands. Then why blame the students if they go to other countries where the entire course could be studied within 10-15 lakhs. In many colleges within the State and outside the State, people pay in cash and they clearly are aware that this money is not accounted for. There are many colleges in Tamil Nadu as well as in other states in India where this practice is rampant. The poor, from the disadvantaged society can never hope to enter such institutions. This is where the inclusion issue becomes important.

I fully agree that nobody should arbitrarily fix fees to be charged by a given institution. But then, the institutions should declare how much they charge, how many faculties they have, and how much infrastructure they have. Then, let the students and parents decide and choose the institution. However, no society can approve the illicit practice of black money transactions in educational institutions.

Now the new Malpractices Bill says that an institution should put on its website, as well as in its brochure, how much it will charge, how many teachers it has, what facilities it has, what is its curriculum and so on. But once you have done that and somebody comes to seek admission, you should not ask for other money. If you are a good institution the money charged should go for the development of the institution. A University or college is not a shareholding company, where it can collect money in black and distribute among the family and shareholders. Even Supreme Court says that institutions can collect a reasonable amount over and above the cost of education but should not become greedy.

Now let me narrate the case of one engineering college in Chennai, which became a Deemed University. The day it became a deemed

University, it increased the intake from 240 to 1200, particularly in popular disciplines, and from every student who went there for admission three lakhs of rupees was collected as capitation fees. But the shocking matter is the facilities and staff strength remained the same in spite of five-fold increase in intake. As a result, in this deemed university, classes started early morning at 5; the same teacher took the class, and as one group is pushed out, a new batch enters – like in a conveyor belt – and so it went on in this fashion till late in the evening. Can you think of such a ridiculous reason for getting university status?

In order to curb the malpractices, every institution needs to declare the number of students admitted, the amount of fees collected, the faculty and infrastructure available. If the institution does not conform to its own declarations in terms of facilities, faculty, fees and curriculum etc., it is liable for punishment. The punishment is going to be severe, consisting of monetary fine and jail sentence. I think this has upset many people. They don't want government control. If there is no government intervention, how are we going to reform this kind of scandalous situation?

Regulatory Reforms

For a holistic reform of higher education, the government is in the process of introducing a bill for the Establishment of National Commission on Higher Education Research (NCHER). What this bill aims to accomplish is to abolish a number of regulatory bodies which have either lost their relevance or have acquired unsavoury reputation. The NCHER will not be a controlling body; nor will it be a licensing or inspecting body. It will not be a regulating body either. Its primary role will be to set norms and standards for guidance of higher educational institutions and related authorities. What it will do is to indicate what higher education should consist of such as knowledge system, integration of knowledge, governance, quality, human values etc. This body will say what should be a college, what should be a vocational institution, what should be a training institution, and so on. They will generally say that these are expected to be your norms and standards for higher education system, and once any institution conforms to these, it qualifies itself to be called

an institution of higher education. If it fulfills the expectations, it will be recognized for the award of degrees. You can choose not to adapt these norms, but then you cannot consider yourself as recognized institutions for award of degree or teaching.

A second regulatory reform is the accreditation. Henceforth, every institution has to go through mandatory accreditation. The National Commission on Higher Education will set all the parameters, all the criteria for accreditation of different institutions. You cannot have the same criteria and parameters for arts college, as for engineering colleges; you cannot have the same criteria for engineering college as for medical colleges; you cannot have the same norms and criteria for a medical college and a law college. So, the norms will take into account discipline variation, degree variation, etc. Some institutions will be predominately research-oriented, and less of teaching. Some other institutions will be predominately teaching and less of research. Accordingly, norms will be set up.

Very competent bodies of this country will be authorized to undertake accreditation. It is not going to be one National Accreditation Assessment Council, one National Board of Accreditation. There are a large number of non-profit institutions which are especially competent to undertake and do thoroughly the process of accreditation. Now, if an institution gets accredited, then it will enjoy a lot of benefits.

There is one other clause which the National Commission is going to insist upon: There will be no distinction between Central University and State University and Private University. In other words, funding of University education will not depend on whether it is a State University, Central University or Private University. If you fulfill the norms that are set by the National   Commission for Higher Education Research, the funding will be equitable. It will be a norm-based funding, and will be a very great departure in terms of resource availability for higher education.

The third bill which I already mentioned is the Malpractices Bill. Anyone institution that declares its policies, programmes and practices will be held accountable to them. If an institution collects money for any activity and does not give a receipt, it becomes a punishable offence. Personally, I refuse to go to any institution which is known to collect money and don't give a receipt. It is a simple principle of ethics.

The fourth bill is Foreign Universities Bill. Today, in India we have 450 foreign university programmes running. No one knows who is running these programmes; what is their caliber, who are the people involved, etc. Only by guess and random sampling we could think of their numbers as 450. When some of these programmes were evaluated by two scholars recently, about 80% were found worthless. These educational institutions running their shops in India are not even accredited in their own countries of origin; they were not recongnised in their own country. Many of them make tall claims and promises through flashy advertisements. These institutions are worthless in their own countries, but they come and offer programme in other countries. One has to recognize that these foreign universities have to be regulated. They must be registered somewhere. Some of these foreign institutions, from abroad started programmes in Hyderabad, Jaipur and other places, and after three years they shut down and the students left. They had collected huge amounts of money, and the students were left in the lurch. The government had to pay a huge price.

Finally, the fifth Bill is the Tribunals Bill. There are hundreds and hundreds of court cases pertaining to higher education. There are lots of universities which cannot employ new faculty members because of court-cases. University of Madras, for example, has suffered from this for the past ten to fifteen years. The functioning of a lot of universities are paralyzed by a number of litigations in the court of law. You may be surprised to know that there are approximately 30000 court cases relating to education matter today. The credibility of higher education is at stake. This Tribunal Bill is contemplated to resolve quickly the disputes, so that the regular functioning of higher education institutions are not hampered.

In conclusion, everyone agrees that we do need reforms and I think we can't just keep on thinking that the government will do everything. We the society, the intellectuals like you must be able to discuss actively the subject matter of higher education and come out with appropriate suggestions. Higher education is a matter requiring the involvement of the whole society.

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Liberalization in Higher Education

G. Viswanathan

The author is Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology
University. From his wide experience as a former minister of
Tamilnaud government, and today a leading provider of vast
educational institutions in India, China and other parts of
the world, the author reflects on the importance of private
sector in education and argues why it deserves to be
supported by government and all concerned. He also
highlights the problems private educational providers are
facing today, and suggests ways to overcome them.

My association with educational institutions has been quite long; to
be precise 26 years of running educational institutions. The experience
ranges from leading an affiliated college to the Deemed University, and
now I am in the international higher education. Besides being a player
on the private sector, I have spent a long time with the government, as
Member of Parliament, Member of the Legislative Assembly, and in
these capacities, I had the opportunity of being a member of various
academic councils too. The experiences at both the government as well
as private sectors are two sides of the same coin. Unless the government
and private sector cooperate with each other, it is difficult to expand
higher education.

The Present Scenario

At present, we have 32000 colleges of universities and the
enrollment is about 123 lakhs to 125 lakhs. Even though the figure seems

very high, when we look into those who are waiting for higher education, they outnumber by almost ten times those who have access to higher education. We have a long way to go in order to reach a decent GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) with respect to higher education. The GER in the developed countries varies from 50% to 80% in higher education. In India, we have around 12%. Unless we take concrete steps to offer higher education to all our children, it will be impossible to sustain the economic development of this country.

We cannot be a progressive nation just with school education. We have to impart higher education to all our children. But we do not have enough institutions of higher learning. So, we have limited seats. Therefore, we ask for different quotas: religion, caste, language etc. We do not insist on reservation for primary and secondary schools, because we have enough seats available there. If the same could be made possible for higher education, we need not fight over small percentages.

The Imperative of Expansion

The first and foremost duty of all of us - the Central government, the State governments and the private sectors - is to expand higher education. The National Knowledge Commission confirms this need and recommends 1500 Universities in 10 to 15 years in order to cope up with the growing need for higher education in the domestic scene and to compete with the rest of the world. Not much has happened since its recommendations three years ago, other than the Central Government merely announcing that it would start 50 new Institutes of higher learning.

All over the world, higher education is imparted in University campuses. Only in three countries - India, Pakistan and Bangladesh - it is offered predominantly in college campuses rather than in universities. Perhaps, there may have been historical reasons to it, but it is high time that we take note of it and move to university education. Why higher education through universities rather than through colleges? Prof. Felix Wilfred, Founder of the Asian Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies says something significant as he speaks about innovations. He says that one

does not find innovation in colleges as they lack research facilities. They do not have budget provisions for research; so, it is the universities which provide wider platform for research. The universities accommodate research students with qualified (Ph.D) faculty to guide them while many colleges do not have such guides. Some of the universities too face the shortage of scholarly guides.

How other countries are fast advancing - while we are moving slowly- can be known, if one compares the rate of growth of China with that of India in the last 25 years. In 1980 China recorded a total of about 1000 research publications, whereas India recorded 10,000 publications. After 25 years, India has grown from 10,000 to 25,000 publications, while China grew from 1000 to a whopping 72,000 publications. It was possible because China began many universities and spent a lot of money on higher education and particularly on research and development. So, in order to be able to stand on par with the rest of the world in publications, patents and research, we need to expand our higher education in the university campuses.

The Tamilnadu government appointed a committee last year to look into the recommendations of Sam Pitroda and explore the feasibility of upgrading many of the present colleges to universities. The committee with Dr. M. Anandakrishnan, Dr. Kulandai Swamy and other members came out with its report. The committee identified about 150 colleges in Tamilnadu, both government and aided, which could be upgraded to universities. It was left to the government to take the final decision based on the recommendation. I do not know what happened afterwards. What is happening in our Country? Why can't we expand? For the first 50 years, the IITs never expanded. Their entire enrollment in a year was about 3000 students. Now with all the new IITs put together they enroll up to 10000 students. We are a country of billions - 1.2 billion is our population. We require many and big institutions. Because of IITs and other central Universities, one imagines small is beautiful. If a university admits 200 to 300 students it is considered as a good university and if another admits 10000 students it is judged as a substandard university. I was also under this impression till I went out and saw the universities outside India.

In Madison, the University of Wisconsin accommodates 45000 students, and yet it is one of the top universities in the world. University of Texas, Austin has 50000 students and yet it is one of the top Universities in USA. All the US Universities except one or two have more than 20000 to 30000 students. I think now it is time to realize that we are not a small nation like Sri Lanka or Nepal to have some small institutions. Our institutions have to grow.

When the Centre as well as the State governments begin a university, they establish it with a very good infrastructure, but afterwards they neither maintain it nor upgrade it. I know a state university started in the same year as Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT). Vice Chancellor of that university told me that they have around 600 students. They could not continue with so few enrollments. Now 60 colleges have been given to them as affiliated colleges, so that they could survive! Most of the Universities survive because of the affiliated colleges. These affiliated colleges pay money to the universities for examination, and other official and unofficial purposes. Without these finances, the universities will not exist. This mentality has to change. We have to expand and accommodate all students who want to go for higher education. In the olden days it was only the rich and higher caste students who entered into universities. Now, everyone - middle class, poor class and everybody - wants higher education. It is time now therefore to expand. But, what stands in the way? It is nothing but the government.

The Woes of Private Institutions

No doubt there is problem with the private universities and colleges, but it is mostly related to the fee structure. Money is essential to run an institution; whether it is called fees, donations or capitation, finance is required. Just look at how much an IIT, NIT or other such premier institutions spend on a student. A NIIT spends about four lakhs per student per year, an IIT spends anything between six to six and half lakhs rupees per year for a student. The student pays around Rs. 50000 per year as fee, but the rest of the amount is paid by the HRD and UGC. But what is the case with the private institutions? The state government

fixes the fee for colleges. It varies from state to state. Last year it was around Rs. 25000 or so in Kerala; 32000 in Tamilnadu. If a college collects more than that, we term it commercialization.

The problem is that so far the central or the state governments have not recognized among us a model for self-financing institutions. In fact we (the private sector) will be happy, if one IIT, one NIIT or one Central University is run on self financing basis. This will pave the way as a model institution. I do not know whether it is possible. But it is necessary in order to recognize somebody as a model, so that others can follow. This is one way of looking at the question of fees in private universities.

As far as the state governments are concerned, they do not want universities. They never say so explicitly, but it is implied in the way they treat those aspiring to become universities. It is because universities require more finances. So, they talk about *autonomy* as an alternative. The colleges are treated like slaves; they have to do whatever they are asked to do, whenever they are asked to do. They conduct classes; examination is conducted somewhere else; question papers come from somewhere; it is evaluated by somebody; at last the result is published somewhere. This is the fate of the students and the teachers.   The teachers are not responsible for the result of their students. That is how it has been happening for centuries. Should we continue with this? Or, Should we not put an end to this?

At present, there is no responsibility for the teacher. Earlier in our times, there was no re-evaluation; now at least some door is open, but even then it is difficult. Most of them do not get extra marks, even if they go for re-evaluation. It is high time that we have a flexible system. We are trained to follow the old rigid higher education system introduced by the British. They have abandoned it but we still cling to it. Today, we find so much flexibility in the educational system of other countries. A civil engineering student can also do mechanical engineering or electronic engineering. At VIT an engineering student can study humanities and science which we have introduced three years ago. Their curriculum

contains 65% of engineering subjects and 35% of humanities, Sciences and Business Studies. We have a flexibility of about 60-70% but we still want to go further. It is high time we introduce flexibility in our curriculum.

The Condition of State Universities

The State universities do not update the curriculum. Compared to the North, the situation in Southern states is better. Only this year with great difficulty the Delhi University introduced semester system, which we in VIT introduced 10 years ago. Semester system and continuous evaluation are the basic reforms of higher education. However, it has not been introduced in some of the state universities.

Of course, our Indian universities are all not of the same quality. There are some which have very high standard, some good, and some bad. There are bad universities on both the public and private sides. We cannot condemn exclusively either the government or the private universities. One such institution - a private university - admitted more than 1000 Ph.D candidates while they have only 200 to 250 staff! This is seen in government university too. A government university in Andhra Pradesh, had conferred 8029 Ph.D with 75 staff members including the faculty in the last two years 2007-2008, 2008-2009. Another University in Tumkur, which is six years old was asked by the Ministry of HRD to send some details about itself. The Vice-Chancellor wrote back saying that since they got computers and internet connection only recently they would need more time to send the information needed by the HRD. A university gets computers after six years and was given a third room for the computer! How are we going to tackle this problem?

The Central and State governments try to divert the public by abusing the private institutions. No doubt that the private institutions need care and support of the government, but, I want them to take care of their government universities first. I want the government universities to be models.

Scarcity of Public Educational Institutions

We have not enough Universities to cater to a very high demand we have for higher education in India. We need to expand. The private

Universities come into existence in order to answer the aspirations of many students who want to go for higher studies but find no place. At least in engineering we are happy that we now can accommodate nearly 10 lakh students. But what about medicine? You go to any country in the world, if Indian students are studying, that will be medicine. Once I met a person in Kyrgyzstan. When there was problem in Kyrgyzstan 150 Indian students were brought back to Delhi. I met the person who is responsible for sending these students to Kyrgyzstan. He told me that they send not only students but also teachers there. What an irony that Indian students are taught medicine in Kyrgyzstan by teachers who are also sent from India! Such things happen because there is so much of control in the educational system of India.

We are creating artificial scarcity in higher education, as a result of which the cost of education goes up. In the Medical Council of India, a single man was holding the entire country to ransom. We are unable to do anything. At least now let us wake up to the fact that we offer only 35000 medical seats in the medical colleges in a country with a population of 1.2 billions. Is it enough? As of today, there is a shortage of seven to eight lakh doctors and 15 lakh nurses. We are not doing anything because we are interested in formulating more regulations. When Dr Manmohan Singh in the Narashima Rao Government brought the new economic policies in 1991, we were very happy because till then our growth had been 3% to 4%, but after liberalization, we began to move upward from 5%, 6%, 8% to 9%. We know well that when the "license permit raj" came to an end, our economy began to grow.

Liberalization in Education

I hope that liberalization will be introduced in education too. At present what I find is the same old "license permit raj" continuing in education. When one wants to start a college, he or she comes face to face with the redapism. One is required to produce 14 No Objection Certificates to start an institution! They are all non-academic. If you go into academics, you need to get approval, affiliation, essentiality certificate, no objection certificate etc. There is a fine institution in Vellore, you must have heard about it, namely Christian Medical College, one of

the foremost institutions in the country. I have been persuading them as a local person to go for more seats, because they have been admitting 60 students in medicine for the last 60 to 70 years. Three years ago they applied for expansion to increase the intake from 60 to 100. It is pending for the last three years. Committees have come, and have gone but they have not heard of anything, because they do not want to pay. This is the kind of situation in higher education. This has to change.

Government talks about reforms in higher education. They introduce number of bills, but nowhere have I found them talk about eradication of corruption in education. They talk about commercialization. I agree commercialization is bad, but can you stop commercialization without stopping corruption? For everything we have to pay: we want to start an institution you have to get no objection certificate, permission, affiliation and nothing moves without payment - official as well as unofficial. Unless we get rid of this how are we going to move forward? And if you introduce more regulations, what will happen? There will be more corruption, and it will affect the poor people.

They argue that the private institutions, if they come into existence, will affect the poor people. It is not so. We have only limited seats in the government institutions that will be occupied by those well-to-do students because who ever goes to good school, gets into the IIT and other important institutions. What about those who study in government schools? They come to ordinary institutions, since only the government institution gets the government subsidy. If you go to private institutions, you are not getting any government grant, subsidy. That is the problem. For example, this year Tamilnadu introduced a scheme whereby the first generation students who go for engineering will get Rs. 20000. 76000 students have taken advantage of this and entered the engineering college this year. It is an indication that if we are going to offer some financial help, lakhs and lakhs of students are willing to study. What prevents them is the financial inability to enter the educational institutions. That is why many of them drop out with 10th class or 12th class. It is high time that the government introduces a scheme whereby wherever a student studies in government institutions, in aided or unaided institutions, he or

she should get financial help and also necessary bank loans. Bank loans now are more open to the people as compared to what was five years ago, but it is yet not available to all. So we have to expand, offer financial assistance to middle class and poor students.

Maintenance of Quality and High Ideals

Quality is the next issue. In order to assure quality, there should be competition. At present, there is no competition. Even among government institutions there is no competition, among private institutions there is no competition at all, and if the government recognizes some good institutions every year automatically competition will start. Again, fixing the fee will kill competition. For good private institutions, where they want to spend more money to create good infrastructure, pay their teachers well and compete with the rest of the world, you can't have the same fees like other institutions. That is what is being done in Tamilnadu, and we are suffering. So far they were all bringing everything into account; but now they have to take the money in cash without receipt because they have to pay their teachers, maintain the campuses, have to expand, and it is not possible within the norms outlined by the government. We should not drive the people to go into black money! If such is the situation, what values are we going to impart to our students? What ideals are we going to present to them?

The Path of Dialogue

It is possible to discuss these issues with the people in beaurocracy or in government through dialogue and discussion; but it never takes place. They meet governments only in Law Courts! You find hundreds of cases pending in High Court and Supreme Court, regarding educational institutions. That is why it is necessary when problems arise, the concerned officials directly enter into dialogue. Whether it is Deemed Universities, State Universities, Private Universities or Central Universities, all can talk to the officials and tell them, what has to be done and what not to be done. It is not happening, and if you run an institution, you find every year some or other new harassment coming. I would request people like Dr M. Anandakrishman, who are close to the government to advise

them to talk directly to the concerned authorities and institutions. If they want to make a decision let them talk to us, consult us and take a decision, whatever it may be. After 26 years now they come and tell me under the new regulations that I should not be the Chancellor. They tell me that if I want to be a Chancellor, I should not be in the Trust. I should not call myself a University. It is not possible. We know if you write to any government authority, we never get a reply because there is no rule, which says you have to reply within a particular time-frame. There are many good things in our country, and there are also a lot of loopholes. Even if one spends one lakh crores, that money is not brought to the notice of the government. There is no law in our country for confiscating illegal wealth, whereas, for corruption death sentence is given in China.

We cannot simply rest on the glories of the ancient universities of India like Nalanda. It is all part of history. In modern educational system, the earliest universities in India are 150 years old, and they are located in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. We will have a very bright future if only we give to our people good and quality education. There is a big future for our students to go out and study in other countries and others can also come here to study. In our Vellore Institute of Technology University (VIT), we have signed around 100 MOUs with universities in various countries. We send our students in final semester wherever they want to go. They can choose the University and we send them. It is possible for our students, and they shine well. When they come back they come with offer letter with scholarship for PhD. It is possible to go out and study and also we welcome students from other countries.

Out of 13 lakhs of international students, seven lakhs are in USA, while we have in India about 25000 or 30000 foreign students. A small country like Malaysia has more than 80000 foreign students. We do not aim at it. We don't encourage it.

We find notices were given by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to 30 institutions to close down; after one month the notice was withdrawn. I do not know what happened in those 30 days. This is the kind of administration we have and we cannot suddenly change

the officials. It is not possible. We should be practical. The only thing is to have fewer regulations, so that the private institutions can grow and we have good institutions which can become universities. I find teachers are against their institutions becoming universities. I was invited by Loyola College three years ago to convince their teachers because they were against it becoming a university. There is nothing that prevents the teachers from going in for universities. They are afraid that their work load will go up. Their salaries will come down. Some kind of fear is there among the teachers. It is also in the government universities. So it is high time that the teachers also cooperate and dialogue takes place at all levels.

Education – A Common Responsibility

Let us not close our eyes and leave everything to the government. No doubt, government support is necessary but everything cannot be left to them. Private initiative has to be there, and unless the government supports, we cannot grow. I want government to change their attitude and support at least good institutions. All of a sudden we cannot close down private Universities and Colleges. It is not possible. It will go against the society and against the nation. So, it is high time that you discuss all these issues. Of course these are my personal experiences as a Chairman of Vellore Engineering College and as Chancellor of Vellore University. I hope at least in future the government will realize the practical problems which we face and allow us to grow and allow us compete with the rest of the world

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Private Higher Education Institutions: Growing Demand and Challenges

G. Suresh Kumar – M. Srihari

The main author of the article is G. Suresh Kumar and co-author is M. Srihari, both of them from the Department of Communication and Media Studies of Bharathiar University, Coimbatore. Though private institutions are keen to offer the courses that cater to the requirements of labour market, the malpractices and commercial motives that prevail in these institutions question the quality, affordability and non-commercial aspects of the higher education. This contribution brings forth the issues prevalent in the present private higher education system. The report of Yashpal Committee is used to set arguments on the challenges and required regulation of private higher education. The framing of rationale and consistent ground rules overseen by a transparent regulatory mechanism is mandatory at present in order to make different layers of institutions work efficiently and serve overall national goals.

1.   Introduction

The emergence of India as a knowledge-based and service driven economy has made its human capital its major strength and potential engine for growth. According to population projections based on 2001 census figures, in 2011 nearly 144 million of India's population will be between the age group 18-23yrs for higher education. With the government spending below 1% of the GDP, the growing demand for

higher education cannot be met with this lowest public expenditure. This has put spotlight on severe inadequacies in India's infrastructure for delivery of education, particularly higher and vocational education. This demographic dividend can become a drag if the demand for skilled personnel that a rapidly growing economy will require is not met both in terms of quantum and quality.[1] At this juncture, one important strategy that knowledge commission suggested was to transform higher education through promoting privatisation.[2]

However, debate continues over the true value or possible costs of the growing privatisation of regulated higher education in India. Some experts argue that private colleges should be supported because they are better suited than public institutions to solving the country's skilled labour shortage and matching the supply of skills they impart to the particular demands of specific industries. Others contend that the private institutions put profit before quality and that their skills-driven courses may not help students in the long run because demand for specialized skill-sets will keep changing.

The Article 26.1 in Universal Declaration of Human Rights voices that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.[3] The official higher education policy of India treats higher education as a non-commercial social activity. Academicians opine that higher education should uphold education's role of service to the society. But critics argue that the service aspect of education will go at the cost of privatisation. Considering these paradoxical viewpoints, this paper focuses on the issues prevalent in private higher education in India. And a critical view of Yashpal Committee report *'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education'* (2009) has

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[1]   PricewaterhouseCoopers (2010). Emerging opportunities for private and foreignparticipation in higher education. Indo-US Summit on Higher Education 2010.

[2]   The National Knowledge Commission on Higher Education. Available: http: knowledgecommission.gov.in/focus/higher.asp

[3]   UNESCO (2004), For every child health, education, equality & protection. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Turkey.

been undertaken to throw light on the issues pertaining to private higher education.

2.   Issues and Challenges of Growing Private
Higher Education -Report of Yashpal Committee

'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education'(2009)[4], the draft report of Prof. Yashpal, Chairman of the UGC/AICTE review Committee, gives a clear picture of the issues and challenges of higher education system of India, and privatisation in particular. The Committee conducted several meetings and had open interaction with close to a thousand persons - Vice-Chancellors, Principals of Colleges and teachers - and also held interaction with large groups, school and college students. The first draft report was submitted to Ministry of Human Resource Dept on 1st march 2009. The report has been taken as a base to set the stage for the arguments in this paper.

2.1. Profit Before Quality

One of the major issues pertaining to private higher education institutions is profit motive. There has been no policy or guidelines to measure the competence of private investors in starting and managing an institution other than the requirement that it should be registered as a non-profit or charitable trust or society. Yashpal committee report states that this lacuna has been exploited by many investors, who have no understanding or experience of the responsibilities associated with institutions of higher education. And the trusts or societies that have been formed largely consist of immediate family members – some of whom had little or no educational background – with some exceptions.

The committee report further says: In many private educational institutions, the appointment of teachers is made at the lowest possible cost. They are treated with scant dignity, thereby turning away competent persons from opting for the teaching profession. A limited number of

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4   Government of India (2009). Committee to advice on the renovation and rejuvenation of higher education. New Delhi.

senior positions are filled at attractive salaries, especially from other reputed institutions, mainly for prestige. Otherwise, there are many terrible instances of faculty being asked to work in more than one institution belonging to the management; their salary being paid only for nine months; actual payments being much less than the amount signed for; impounding of their certificates and passports; compelling them to award pass marks in the internal examination to the "favourites" and fail marks for students who protest illegal collections and so on. These kinds of malpractices in private higher educational institutions have led to the spoilage of quality higher education.

2.2. Mushrooming of Deemed Universities

The sudden spurt in the number of newly established educational institutes as deemed universities are another area of concern. Some of the private institutions took the deemed-to-be university route to get degree-granting powers. Between 2000 and 2005, 26 private-sponsored institutions got the deemed university status. Since 2005, the number of private deemed universities has increased to 108. By a notification of the UGC, it is no longer necessary for them to use the adjective "deemed" and they all call themselves simply universities. In Tamil Nadu alone, the number of private deemed universities has increased from 18 in 2007 to 35 in 2008 and many are in the queue. As of March 2009, there are about 130 deemed universities in India.[5] Though, deemed universities do not have affiliating powers, many of them have a number of campuses spread throughout the country. The provision for the status of deemed university was made with a noble intent. It was felt that the institutions, which had unique and distinct character of their own could enjoy the privileges of a university without losing their distinct character and autonomy. What has raised the concern of the academic world is the fact that the majority of these institutes are not established with any educational purpose, and they end up only deluding the students. In view of considerable misuse of the provision for Deemed University status,

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[5]   Government of India. (2010) Annual report 2009-2010. Ministry of Human Resource & Development. New Delhi.

the granting of such status should be put on hold till unambiguous and rational guidelines are evolved. For this effect, the Ministry of Human Resource Development on Jan 2010 announced de-recognition of 44 deemed universities, which were found to be deficient on many grounds.[6]

After examining the functioning of deemed universities the Yashpal Committee reported that the behaviour of some private universities was a matter of serious concern to a large body of students and parents. There have been several instances of campus violence and related litigations. A detailed probe into the basic reasons for the concerns revealed that many of them were professional colleges that got approval from the regulatory bodies for university status. Immediately thereafter, they started admitting five to six times their intake capacity, without a corresponding increase in faculty strength or academic infrastructure. The classes and laboratories were conducted at strange hours like a factory production operation. The students who paid huge capitation fees felt cheated. The students from the underprivileged sections could not get admission in many of them due to heavy capitation fees.

Further the Committee notified that the existing guidelines and the Memoranda of Association (MOA) with the UGC are ambiguous and inappropriate to the new situation. Compounding the stigma is the offer made by some of them, after obtaining university status, to give "guaranteed" degrees at any level, including Ph.D., for a price. This has dealt a serious blow to the credibility of the Indian university degree.

2.3. Issues of Affordability

The Yashpal Committee stated that many private institutions charge exorbitant fees (beyond the prescribed norms) in the form of many kinds of levy (not accounted for by vouchers and receipts) and are unable to provide even minimum competent faculty strength. The non-affordability of the programmers of such institutions to a vast majority of eligible students is a matter of public concern. The regulatory agencies have

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[6] The 44 Deemed Universities under MHRD scanner. (2010, January 19). Available: http:// www.indiaedunews.net/ Universities / The 44 Deemed Universities under MHRD scanner 10303/

been unable to come to grips with the problems of capitation fees and unauthorized annual fees mainly due to deficiencies in enforcement instruments, and partly due to high-level reluctance to sort out this problem. Since the norms for fixation of fees are vague, the quantum of fees charged has no rational basis. The illegal capitation fees range from: Rs. 1-10 lakh for the engineering courses; Rs. 20-40 lakh for MBBS courses; Rs. 5-12 lakh for dental courses; and about Rs. 30,000-50,000 for courses in arts and science colleges, depending on the demand.

A proposal to prevent, prohibit and punish educational malpractices is under consideration of Government which aims to curb adoption of unfair practices by technical and medical educational institutions, universities and other colleges in matters related to charging of capitation fees, making admissions not according to merit, making of false claims on the availability of infrastructure, faculty or recognition of the institution etc.[7] When such a law is enforced, it will reduce the issues of malpractices in higher education institutions to a large extent.

3. Review of Recommendations of the Yashpal Committee

Upon reviewing the above said issues which is prevalent in present Indian private higher education, Yashpal Committee has come up with recommendations to regulate the private institutions.

3.1. Regulation of Profit Motive

Yashpal committee clearly indicates that private initiatives in the field of higher education should not be driven by the sole motive of profit. As suggested by the committee, specific studies need to be done regarding the sources of funds utilized by such family trusts or societies as there are allegations that such funds are either unaccounted wealth from business and political enterprises (occasionally with some bank loans for purposes of legitimacy) or from the capitation fees charged from the students in addition to a plethora of unexplained fees charged whimsically by these managements. The present practice of family members who

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[7]   Government of India. (2010) Annual report 2009-2010. Ministry of Human
         Resource & Development. New Delhi.

sometimes do not have the experience or the competence relating to education occupying the controlling position of the governing systems of the private educational institutions should be prevented. Similarly, the practice of conferring academic designations such as Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, and Pro Vice Chancellor on members of the family has to be stopped. Once, these recommendations are implemented in practice, it will refine the role of private players in higher education.

3.2. Deemed Universities

Yashpal committee redefines the concept of University as, "Every University, Public or Private, could strive to attain the status and eminence that is expected of a university, derived from the adherence to the basic concepts of university discussed in this regard in terms of curriculum, feasibility of its regulation and transparency of the governance system." According to the committee report, the institutions wishing to get deemed university status should demonstrate special capabilities as were originally intended and should be rigorously evaluated to see if they fulfil the holistic and universal concept of university outlined in their report. Those institutions which have somehow managed to secure such status should be given a period of three years to develop as a university and fulfill the prescribed accreditation norms failing to which the status given to them would be withdrawn.

The Report of the committee for review of existing institutions deemed to be universities[8] which was published in 2009 after the Yashpal committee's report recommends the Indian Government to take a fresh look at the existing UGC Guidelines for grant of deemed university status taking into consideration, the observations made in their report which were already dealt with earlier by Yashpal committee. To maintain legal sanctity, those improved guidelines should be in the form of regulations.

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[8]   Government of India (2009). Report of the committee for review of existing institutions deemed to be universities. New Delhi.

3. 3. *Affordability*

The primary focus should, therefore be on making education affordable, either through scholarships or loans. An assured loan to every student (and a scholarship based on merit for the needy) in accredited institutions should be the aim (Committee's recommendation). Institutional funding can then be for capital costs and research, and based on the worthiness of the institution. Once a student qualifies to enter an institution of his/her choice, he/she should not be deprived of education for want of money. It is the duty of the institution and the state to provide for her education through means as suggested above. Steps need to be initiated to ensure availability of loans and scholarships.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the demand for higher education in India is ever increasing due to the demand for knowledge driven workforce. The private higher education is highly indispensable to strengthen India both in economic and social terms, to meet the mass education requirements of the rising younger population, and to avert the constraints in the public spending on higher education. However, when it comes to quality the private higher education has its serious repercussions due to its commercial motives. According to higher education policy of India, higher education should function as a non-commercial social activity; but most of the private institutions in India are just educational shops. However, while considering the supply and demand side of the higher education system, the private higher education is the alternative and supportive one for the conventional higher education. Yashpal Committee also reveals the importance of private higher education, but the Committee is more concerned about the regulation of these private initiatives to put them on the right track to serve the national goals. For this purpose, a credible regulatory mechanism is mandatory. The present regulatory mechanism should be overhauled and the higher education system should be rejuvenated by applying the practical recommendations provided by the Yashpal Committee.

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Higher Education Networking:
Future Trajectories

Nirmala Jeyaraj

The author is a former Programme Director of the United Board for Christian Higher Education, Hong Kong, and former Principal of Lady Doak College, Madurai. In this article, after reviewing the present state of higher education in the country and some of the problems assailing it, the author proposes networking as an important means today which can help educational institutions in their pursuit for quality and excellence. These are to be sought not in isolation but in collaboration. She also gives some concrete examples of the ways and fields in which educational networking could happen profitably for all the institutions involved.

In this globalized era, the contemporary society is undergoing rapid changes in social, political, economic and cultural realms. We are witnessing a transition from industry to knowledge based economy, and this is a welcome change. Naturally, India with its rich human resources is emerging as a major player in the global knowledge economy which necessitates a radical reformation of our higher education system from its present 'sick status'.

Any look into the future requires knowledge of the historic past as a base and a thorough understanding of the realities of the present as a platform. Ancient India was well known for its renowned centers of learning like Nalanda, Varanasi and Takshashila. Our age-old system of

education evolved in the past from 'Gurukula' model, to 'Pathashala'' to 'Sanghs' to 'Madrassahs' to 'Ashrams' over centuries, and was mostly restricted to a privileged few of a particular religion or caste. Later, during the British rule, with the Christian missions starting many schools and colleges all over the country, education became accessible to the common people particularly the women and other marginalized castes in the Indian society. Meanwhile, the social revolution brought about by reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Annie Besant, Pandita Ramabai and others transformed the mindset of the people by motivating them to get educated breaking the cultural barriers. Education of the masses gave the right impetus for the freedom movement to gain momentum. Even many women activists came out openly to join the freedom fighters and contributed to the nation's independence. But, today even after six decades of democracy, equity and accessibility are yet to be achieved in our educational system. In order to set this right, the 11th five year plan presented access, equity and inclusiveness as top priorities for reforming higher education, and the same thrust may be continued in the 12th five year plan as well.

Indian Higher Education- Present Trends and Challenges

Our Indian higher education system, though one of the largest of its kind, is said to be in a 'quiet crisis'. Though tremendous changes in its form, process, content, methodology and mode of delivery have taken place over the past decades, a thorough and quick revamping is essential in order to achieve the goals of education and fulfill the need and expectations of the learner and the society, and thereby meet the challenges of the increasing global competition.

The Quality Issue

Indian higher education has become a very complex enterprise. The global economic policies of privatization and liberalization have made education seamless with growing competition from within and outside one's national boundaries. This has been compounded by the rapid advancement in technology, particularly in the field of information and communication technology which has revolutionized the teaching-learning process from kindergarten to post-graduate and research levels. It has become difficult and costly, particularly to the developing nations, to

compete in the global education market. Hence, there is greater demand for improvement of quality on par with international standards. This puts pressure on the education providers. Government's response to improving quality of education has been positive in that it has increased funding allocated for education from Rs. 9500 crore in the 10th five year plan to Rs. 84,943 crore in the 11th plan . Quality consciousness has been raised among the colleges and universities nationwide by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). Further, UGC is promoting quality by awarding special recognition to universities and colleges as 'centers of excellence' or 'colleges with potential for excellence'. These steps have motivated educational institutions to aspire for higher standards of quality and performance. Yet not a single Indian institution has attained the quality status of being sighted in the global rank listing, indicating that our standards are much lower than that of top ranking institutions. Our immediate goal should be, then, to raise our standards to become globally competitive.

The Expansion Issue

Expansion in higher education like enhancing the number of seats in the existing courses, starting new courses and new universities and colleges has raised the GER from 7% to 14 % and the aim is to reach 30% by 2020 on par with other developing nations. But the problem we face is the unregulated and uneven expansion of our educational system. During the last two decades, the number of universities, research institutes, arts & science colleges, teacher training and medical colleges have doubled, while the number of engineering colleges has disproportionately increased fivefold. Starting engineering colleges in the outskirts of every city mostly with a commercial motive and pumping - in black money has become the order of the day. Most of these institutions have just buildings but poor faculty expertise, but they charge exorbitant fees. I am not against privatization, but if educational institutions are run as a commercial venture just for profit, exploiting the public and offering poor quality education the matter has to be viewed seriously and steps have to be taken to control them through proper regulatory and monitoring mechanisms. On the other hand, well established and well run arts and

science colleges have declining enrollment and deteriorating quality in the traditional humanities and basic science courses, and if this trend continues, soon there will be a dearth of good teachers, scientists, administrators, health and legal professionals etc, while engineers would be in surplus. They will be either unemployed or under employed. Something has to be done in order to stop such skewed development of our educational system.

The Issue of Exclusion

The cost of higher education particularly professional education is ever increasing and it naturally tends to exclude the poor. On one hand we are happy that more number of universities and professional colleges are established, opening more opportunities for higher education. On the other hand, higher education is becoming increasingly expensive, more so the highly sought after courses offered by private institutions. In addition, most of these institutions levy huge capitation fees (though illegal), thus preventing the poor and rural students from entering these institutions. The resulting educational disparity is very well indicated in the statistical data on GER. The rural agricultural labor population and the rural poor are the lowest with 1.41% and 1.3% GER respectively. Other socio-cultural factors such as gender, caste and religion further add to this exclusivity making it beyond the reach of the poor and marginalized sector of the society. The government reservation policy helps to a limited extent the highly meritorious students to enter the system while those who are average or above average are left behind. Most often the educational loans so loudly talked about are not available to the needy when it comes to the practical reality.

The Issue of Mismatch

Another trend we notice is the availability of large number of vacant seats for some courses, while other courses are much in demand and packed, resulting in an overflow of student strength. Though several factors could explain this trend, the most important ones are the nature of courses, quality, reputation and locality of institutions and their fees

structure. Several arts and science colleges, though reputed for quality, have dwindling student strength except in business studies and English. Though this trend may not be sustained, still the viability is a serious matter of concern.

The other mismatch is in the supply and demand at product level. There is huge unemployment/underemployment due to irrelevant syllabus, poor academic training and lack of required skills. What the employers require is missing in the students graduating from higher education institutes. They require additional training after their UG/ PG degrees. The Industry- Institute partnership which is vocalized so much is very limited in practice. The partnership, to be effective, needs to start right from syllabus planning to final placement level. What the Industries/ employers require has to be carefully knit into the academia and this has to be a continuous process for which the system has to be flexible and ready to adopt changes quickly. The present affiliating system does not lend itself to such quick changes, and is a huge hurdle for implementing dynamic and innovative changes in curriculum. Educators, education planners and administrators have to jointly explore and devise ways and means for revamping liberal arts education, making it relevant, value laden and job- oriented.

Further, the disparity in pay structure between the government aided and self financed systems has to be balanced so that they become equitable. Salaries have to be based on qualification and performance and not on whether they are employed in government or private institutions. Similarly, unduly hiked salary given to employees in particular fields (IT industry) or jobs has to be reviewed.

Major Challenges to be Addressed in the Present higher Educational System

How to promote a balanced growth and expansion of liberal arts and professional education while maintaining relevance, utility and value orientation?

How to sustain and enhance quality and standards while moving towards inclusiveness and equity?

While encouraging public-private partnership in education, how to control and regulate private institutions to provide equitable and quality education?

How to find/ provide adequate financial resources to keep pace with fast changing technology requirements in teaching learning process? process?

As prescribed by NAAC the five undergirding principles/values that should be kept in focus while looking at ways of reforming higher education are:

Promotion of global competence

Inculcation of human values

ICT enabled teaching, learning and administration

Quest for excellence

Contribution to nation building

A multi-pronged approach is essential to effectively address the present challenges keeping to the above framework. '

Networking as a strategy to revitalize Indian Higher Education

Networking in higher education is not a new concept. While partnership is usually between two institutions, networking involves more like-minded institutions who come to a common understanding based on agreed norms and conditions and collaborate to achieve the set goals synergistically. It may involve sharing of human and other resources based on each one's strengths and needs. In the place of 'cut-throat' competition a 'win-win' situation is created to benefit all members. Collective strength and wisdom of the group helps address crucial issues such as energy crisis, water, pollution and climate change at local or global level more effectively.

Levels of networking

To begin with, networking needs to be practiced at micro level within an institution between different departments or units. Very often it is noticed that the available human or other learning resources in one department or unit are not shared with others in the same institution for effective utilization. Maximizing available resources through sharing of some sophisticated/ specialized equipment and other learning resources and developing certain centralized facilities eg: common instrumentation room/informatics lab, with set norms and guidelines for common usage are some of the cost effective ways. Moreover, this would encourage students and faculty across disciplinary barriers to develop an integrated approach to learning. In the same way, collaboration could be extended beyond one's institutional boundary to neighboring universities/colleges. For example, networking of college libraries in the same city would benefit the student population providing enhanced access to learning resources.

Networking at macro level among likeminded institutions in a state/ region involving collaborative teaching, research or other extension activities is the next level. UGC has been promoting the same idea through 'cluster college concept'. Some common issues could be addressed collectively either through applied or action oriented research or community based projects. Development of integrated curricula with emphasis on global perspective as for example in intercultural studies, environmental studies, interfaith relations and peace studies, service learning etc may be collaboratively undertaken. Student/faculty exchanges between member institutions or organizing common student/faculty seminars/training programs in identified areas are worthwhile initiatives for cooperative learning and maximization of available resources.

Third level of networking (mega level) could be developed at national/global level. The issue of mobility among the members for face to face interaction may be overcome to some extent by the use of appropriate technology. But it would be a valuable experience to occasionally visit each other's institution or get together for varied academic activities. National funding bodies encourage such networking

activities and have made provisions for travel assistance. India being rich in diversity, universities and colleges of different regions (north, south and northeast) could learn from each other, bridging the gap between north and south. Faculty and student visits/exchange programs would offer a wonderful opportunity to get exposed to the rich national diversity and culture and promote national integration. The same is true of international partnerships as well. International exposure and experience would broaden the outlook and enhance the quality of our system, administration, infrastructure and learning as a whole.

Networking ...an Uphill task

To form or develop a network of colleges or universities is not an easy task. There is a need for a leader to initiate and coordinate the formation and functioning of the network. One has to invest a lot of time and energy to facilitate this and must have a strong conviction to overcome the hurdles. It is not easy to identify common goals, arrive at an agreement with mutual trust and initiate cooperative action, shedding all unhealthy competition. The temptation is to do it alone rather than as a group. Educators and educational administrators need to work hard against geographic, cultural, linguistic and mental barriers. They should be willing to take risks and be open to change policies/systems and adapt innovations. There should be flexibility inbuilt into the system to allow changes. Adequate fund allocation needs to be made in the institutional budget for networking activities. National educational bodies like UGC, CSIR and ICMR could allocate funds for such networking activities involving teaching, innovative curriculum development and applied research relating to common issues. Such steps would facilitate and promote network formation. Of course, the end result would be truly rewarding.

Finally, a few models of both national and international network of higher educational institutions are listed below with their web addresses. It may be noticed that each network is formed with specific goals and programs are planned to realize the set objectives. It is worth visiting their web sites for details in terms of their structure, how they function and what their activities are.

All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) is a professional network of 300 or more Christian colleges spread all over the country. The association through its various activities and programs encourages the member colleges to provide quality, value laden educational service to all irrespective of creed, caste and class and thereby promote equity and justice in our society. (www.aiache.net).

Environmental Education Network of the Philippines (EENP) is a network of Philippine universities and colleges. They are committed to work for environmental care and protection through their curricular, research and extension activities and other campus practices. As a network they have evolved a system of green accreditation of educational institutions with set standards and procedures, and are promoting healthy environmental practices in university campuses. Collaborative research to tackle local environmental issues is undertaken by member institutions and their findings discussed at the annual conferences. (www.eenp.org.ph).

Service Learning Asia Network (SLAN) is a network of colleges and universities committed to work together through online sharing, conferences and student exchange programs and promote the pedagogy of service-learning in their curriculum.

Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA) is a wonderful model network to emulate (www.acuca.net). The association has about 60 member institutions from seven Asian countries and is very active and regular in organizing conferences to benefit educational leaders, faculty and students.

Indian educational institutions could form such national networks focusing on particular issues and strive together to further their educational goals and become excellent centers of learning. Let us hope that a few such networks would be formed to improve the overall quality of our higher education system. Hopefully a few would emerge as excellent institutions to find a place in the list of world top rankers in the coming years.

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Higher Education Budget : Impact on Dalits

Semmalar Selvi

The author is a research scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras. In this paper, she examines the recent trends in the higher education system by referring to General Enrolment Ratio in higher education, allocation GDP spending of the government for higher education and traces the decline in budgetary for higher education back to post liberalization policies of the central government. It is argued that in a divided society like India, where the enrolment of Dalits is already far below that of other communities, the steep cut in budget allocation for higher education and non-utilization/misappropriation of funds under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan would further worsen the situation.

PART I

Introduction

Education is one of the most crucial tools to bring change especially among the socially deprived, discriminated and excluded communities. It can help attain realistic empowerment of the underprivileged by enabling them to participate in the economic development processes. India has the third largest higher education system next to U.S and China and the second largest stock of scientific and technical manpower in the world. The future economy of India will depend on a well-educated work force. While this underscores the need for revitalising the higher education systems in India, it is also important to take stock of the situation, particularly with regard to those sections of Indian society, which most urgently need to be empowered and lifted out of chronic poverty.

Developments in the field of Higher Education

The colonial rule did not pay attention to higher education until the mid-19th century when the British realised that educated civil servants were needed to administer the state. In the 1850s, the first universities were founded in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, where the medium of instruction was English and the curriculum was largely limited to fields related to administration such as law, social sciences and allied disciplines[1]. However, the academic system remained quite small – at the time of independence there were 3,69,000 students studying in 27 universities and 695 colleges. As late as 1961, only 1.5% of the relevant age group participated in post-secondary education.

The post-independence period did see considerable development in terms of setting up colleges and universities. Fifty years on (2004-05), there were 348 Universities (including private and government) and 17,625 colleges with 1,04,81,000 students enrolled in that year.

General Enrolment Ratio –GER in Higher Education

The higher education participation of a country is determined by its general enrolment ratio. In this regard India's position is quite worrying when compared with other developed and developing countries. According to the 2009 report of UNESCO Institute for Statistics the GER of USA, Australia and Japan are 83%, 77% and 58 % respectively, while India's GER is only 13%. Even Malaysia and China are ahead at 32% and 23% respectively.
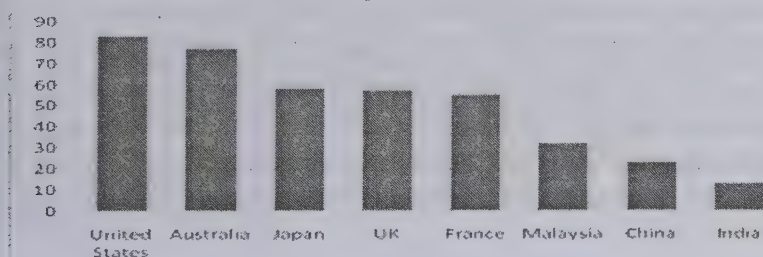
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Public Reports: Education Statistics, 2009

[1.] Albach, P. (June 2009). The Giants Awake: Higher Education Systems in India and China. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol44, pp. 39-51.

GDP spending and per Student Expenditure on Higher Education

The reasons for a very low GER in higher education could be correlated with a country's spending on higher education. While developed countries such as USA, UK and Australia spend a little above 1% of their GDP on higher education, India, which as a developing nation needs to invest in infrastructure and resources, spends only 0.37 % of its GDP for higher education. In contrast, other developing countries spend much more of their GDP on higher education – for example Malaysia at 2.7%.

Country vs Share of GDP for Higher Education (Figures in %)
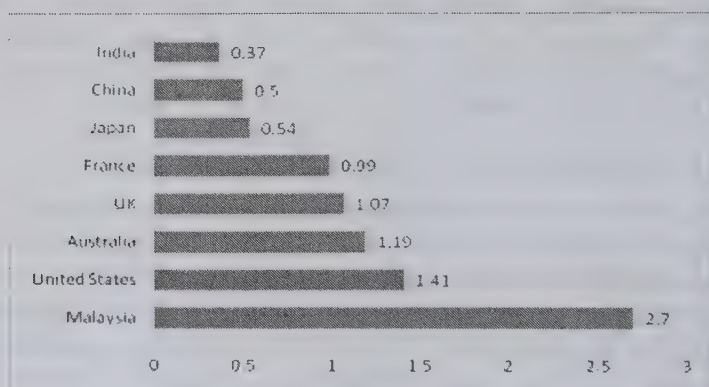
Source: Higher Education in India: Need for Change, Pawan Agarwal 2006

In this context India's position in terms of per student expenditure too is far below that of other Asian giants. While India spends just 406 US $ per student, China spends 2728 US $ and Japan spends 4830 US $ Trends over the last couple of decades reveal the decreasing share (measured as percentage of GDP) of state spending on higher education in India, and concomitant with that one of the slowest rates of growth of GER[2]

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[2] Agarwal, P. (June 2006). *Higher Education in India: Need for Change.* Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (Working paper no. 180) pp. 12-18.

Country vs Per Student Expenditure in dollars (Figures in %)

		Value
Malaysia		11790
United States		9629
UK		8502
France		8010
Australia		7751
Japan		4830
China		2728
India		406
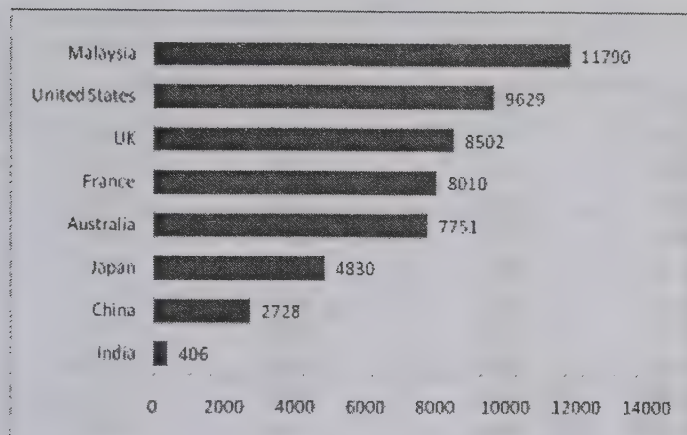
Source: Higher Education in India: Need for Change, Pawan Agarwal 2006

PART II

The Post-Liberalization Policy and Higher Education

In this context it is also important to examine the government's post-liberalization policy on higher education in the wake of India's on-going and increasing integration into the global economy. Alongside the steep cuts in spending on education, especially higher education, we find that in 1997 the government of India identified a large set of social and economic services, classified them into public goods, merit goods and non-merit goods, and proposed to reduce subsidies to non-merit goods. In the education sector, education up to the elementary level was considered as a merit good, and because secondary and higher education has been labelled as a non-merit good it was proposed to reduce the scale of subsidies at these levels, including higher education, by about 50 per cent[3].

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[3] Tilak, B. J. (May 2004). Public Subsidies in Education in India: The need for Change. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, pp. 343-359.

Table:1 Public Expenditure on Higher Education per Student

	In Current Prices	In 1993-94 Prices	Index
1990-91	5652	7676	100.00
1991-92	5636	6727	87.64
1992-93	6111	6710	87.42
1993-94	6738	6738	87.78
1994-95	7329	6687	87.12
1995-96	6944	5812	75.72
1996-97	7207	5619	73.20
1997-98	7793	5692	74.15
1998-99	9536	6448	84.00
1999-2000	10683	6954	90.59
2000-01RE	11989	7484	97.50
2001-02BE	9723	5873	76.51

Source: Based on *Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education* (various years).

While withdrawing subsidies and gradually reducing expenditure on higher education the government opened up the sector for private players to set up educational institutions. The private participation was justified as a supplementary effort, which was necessary due to the constraints on government spending. Dictated by financial viability, the fee structure in private institutions had to be such that it would not be possible for the economically and socially deprived to access them. Thus the primary qualification for access to higher education would henceforth not be marks/merit, but the purchasing power of the households and their ability to pay the fees in the private institutions.

Since the opening up of the Indian economy in 1991, the government of India has adopted, in response to structural adjustments and fiscal discipline required by international funding institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, various policy measures such as promoting public private partnerships in education, passing legislation in favour of corporates to get into education, relaxing the rules to let in foreign universities and so on. One of the most significant measures introduced by the government

is to promote educational loans as a compensatory measure for cutting down public expenditure on education. The burden of debt brought on by the expenditure on higher education has thus also been 'privatised' and passed on to individual households. This has further increased the vulnerability of marginal, socially and economically deprived households and has made access to higher education that much more difficult for them[4].

Growth of Student Loan Portfolio in India
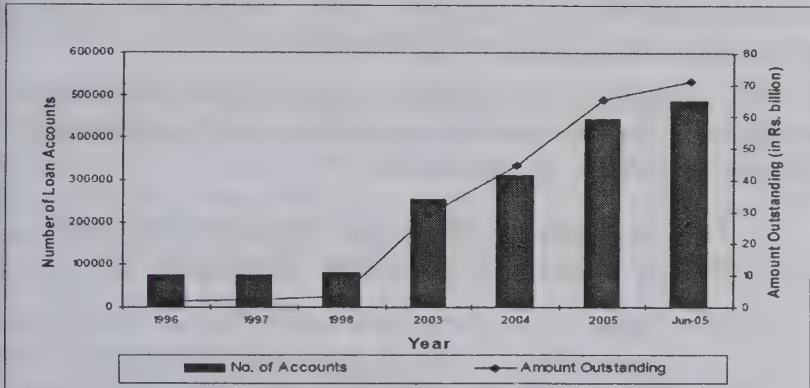
The relationship between the need to expand Higher Education and promoting privatisation and commercialisation of Education where access is largely determined by purchasing power needs closer scrutiny. The All India Forum for Right to Education (AIF-RTE)[5] has a clear position on this: *".... the hidden agenda of providing low interest loans to the students is again to facilitate the growth of expensive private/foreign educational institutions, rather than to help the students. ...Along with this, a policy for promoting unregulated*

[4] Tilak, B. J. (January 1999). Student Loans as the Answer to Lack of Resources for Higher Education. *Economic and Political weekly*, Vol. 34, pp.19.

[5] AIF- RTE All India Forum for Right to Education is a body which represents teachers, students organisations, grass-roots groups, academics and social activist 16 different state.

foreign direct investment (FDI) in higher education is going to be legitimised through the new laws to be enacted in Parliament". [6]

PART III

Dalits and Higher Education

These strategies of government have a serious significance in the Indian context as our society is already divided on the basis of caste. Even today caste determines to a very large extent the economic economic participation in society, and has a significant impact on accessing education, especially higher education.

The participation of marginalised sections like Dalits and Tribals enrolled in higher education is already far below the general category students, as shown by the table below.

Table 2: Groups with lower enrolment ratio in Higher Education -1999-2000 (Figure in %)

Religion	Category	Social Groups				
		SC	ST	OBC	Non-SC/ST. OBC	All
	Hindu	4.88	6.16	7.06	19.71	10.44
	Muslim	1.83	4.41	3.94	5.91	5.34
	Sikh	1.81	NA	NA	18.94	11.28
Gender	Female (Total)	3.16	5.57	4.70	16.52	8.05
	Rural (Female)	1.64	4.75	2.08	7.10	3.56
Rural	Rural	3.30	5.15	4.11	10.58	5.72
Poor	Poor	1.69	1.32	2.42	5.57	2.43
	Poor Rural	1.31	0.89	1.25	2.50	1.30
Occupa-tion	Wage Labor (Rural) (a) Agriculture	1.63	0.67	1.16	1.93	1.41
	(b) Non-Agril.	1.52	0.91	4.26	4.02	2.91
	Wage Labour (Urban)		1.53	3.34	4.30	3.26
	Poor Wage Labour Household (Rural) (a) Agriculture	0.01	0.91	0.47	0.93	0.86
	(b) Non-agri.	00	00	.52	1.08	0.37
	Poor Wage Labour (Urban)	2.61	1.93	2.70	1.80	2.38
	Landless (Total) Rural	2.96	11.46	4.15	8.85	5.59
	Landless (Poor) Rural	1.05	1.38	.73	.85	.94
	Total					10.00%

Source: UGC sponsored study 2006 Sukhadeo Thorat Committee report

[6]   AIF-RTE. (September 2010). Letters. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, pp.4-5.

The General enrolment of Hindu SC and ST is just 4.88% and 6.16% respectively as compared to non-SC/ST, OBC which is 19.71% .When it comes to SC and ST women it is even lower at 3.16% and 5.57respectively.

Commercialisation would further deny the Dalits, who have been socially and economically deprived for ages, opportunities to access higher education. Rather than fostering inclusion in higher education, such policies would further increase the divide between the have's and have-not's within society and compound social imbalances.

One of the prevalent notions is that SC and ST students drop out at the school level itself, hence it might have an impact on their enrolment ratio in higher education. However, comparative figures for percentage of students who complete school successfully reveal a different picture. For example, the general enrolment ratio of all students in Tamil Nadu according to 2006 statistics was 16.36%. Statistics from the same year reveal that the overall pass percentage for CBSE students was 87.28%, while that of SC students was 86.90%. In 2006, these figures were 74.50% (overall) and 61.52% (SC) for the Tamil Nadu State Board e

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examinations. In the light of this data it is pertinent to ask why the enrolment ratio for SC students in institutions of Higher Education is a measly 8.28 % and that for ST students 4.4%. [7]

The existence of provisions like reservation, fee concession and relaxation in marks for SC and ST students is limited to state owned institutions of higher education. The capacity of these institutions, which was already inadequate, is being further squeezed due to the decline in public spending on higher education. The real problem for SC and ST students is not about getting these relaxations for the few seats available in the government institutions; they would need financial support to get into the educational institutions in a commercialised situation. This can be done through exclusive budgetary allocations. A policy initiative in the form of the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan, which was earlier known as the Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), already exists. The state as well as the central governments have to ensure its implementation.

Dalit Budget and Higher Education

The idea of SCP and TSP was conceived during the sixth plan when the government realised that the general schemes are not impacting the socio-economic status of the SC and ST population to the desired extent. A committee headed by the then Finance Minister and the present Prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh recommended the Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub Plan. The table below shows the schemes for which the government had made allocations under SCSP in the union budget for higher education during the period 2005-10.

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7   Government of India. Ministry of Human Resource Development, (2006) Tables of Statistics of School Education, *Selected Educational Statistics 2005-2006.*

Table3:   Budgetary allocations under SCSP in Union Budget
(Rs In Crores)

Schemes	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Post Matric Scholarship Scheme	313.24	371.89	440	611	731	735
Girls Hostels for SCs	22	0.01	32	32	55	56
Boys Hostels for SCs	26	0.01	28	33	38	39
Pre Matric Scholarship	16		16	25	54	79
Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship				88	75	75
Top Class Education				16	20	19

Source: Computations from Union Budget Expenditure Volume I

The main idea behind the scheme was to earmark funds for SCP/ TSP from the Central Ministry/Department Plan outlay, at least in proportion to the SC/ST population of the country, which is 16% and 7% respectively. Right since its inception this policy has not been executed as it was designed since none of the departments has been allocating funds in proportion to the SC/ST population. The amount denied under the scheme in the union budget from 2005-2010 alone is 72537.10crores[8]. Proper implementation of this policy initiative would have gone a long way in ensuring the development of these sections of Indian society over the last 25 years. Particularly in higher education a proportionate allocation under this scheme would have led to a consistent increase in the enrolment of SCs.

Not only has the implementation of the SCP and the TSP been indifferent, the various schemes that were launched have little relevance to recent developments in the field of education. There have been no

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[8]   Source: Computations from Union budget2005-2010, expenditure volume- I

schemes that could help SC students get admission to professional courses. The post matric scholarship would not even cover 10% of the total fee for a good professional course. The ineffectiveness of these strategies further underscores the failure of the state in increasing the enrolment of the marginalised sections in higher education.

A look at the Tamil Nadu allocations for education under SCSP reveals that the government has denied 1493 crores from 1997 to 2006 under SCSP. [9]

Table 4: Details of the SCSP allocation in Tamil Nadu Higher Education department 2010-2011 (Rs in Crores)

Agriculture labour welfare board-educational assistance to the children of members studying graduate/ post graduate courses, law, veterinary sciences, polytechnic engineering courses under SCP	1.464
Free education to SC/ST converts to Christianity studying in BA, BSc, B.com courses. Scholarships and stipends	0.945
Chief minister's merit award to Adi-dravidar students for pursuing college studies	0.6764
Opening of Adi-dravidar welfare post graduate hostels	1.1873
Free education to the students of SC/ST converts, girls studying in PG courses	0.525
Assistance to SC/ST converts to Christianity for higher educational special scholarship scheme	16.9673
Loans for pursuing professional and degree courses to SC/ST converts to Christianity	0.035
Total	**21.8**

Source: Computations from TN Budget 2010-2011

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[9]   Source: Computations from TN Budget 2010-2011

The nature of allocations made under SCSP in the year 2010 to 2011 in the Tamil Nadu budget proves that there is no comprehensive scheme or a strategic scheme to address the issue of accessibility of higher education for SCs. The amount allocated for assistance would not cover even 50% of the students who pass out of secondary schools. There is also no emphasis on SC admissions in professional courses.

The reason often cited by the government that it is difficult to make divisible schemes in every department need not apply to education where individual benefits could be easily measured by students' enrolment. However, there seems to be a reluctance in making allocations in this department too.

It might be also important to note that even existing facilities such as SC/ST hostels are mostly in very poor condition. Students have had to resort to protests to bring this to the notice of the government. For example, residents of MC Raja hostel in Chennai blocked traffic in the peak hour on 21st December 2010 demanding basic amenities in hostels. Appropriate allocation of funds would ensure that existing facilities are properly utilized. [10]

It is important for the government to think through the lens of the marginalised while making alterations in the higher education sector. Restructuring of higher education should be pro poor and pro marginalised and should not further exclude the excluded. Cutting down the budget for higher education will adversely affect the socially and economically marginalised and undermine inclusiveness in higher education.

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[10] Dorairaj, S. (2011, January 15-28). *Hellhole hostels*. (THE HINDU) Retrieved from www.flonnet.com: http://www.flonnet.com/fl2802/stories/20110128280209000.htm

What is "Christian" about Christian Colleges? A New Quest for Identity

Felix Wilfred

In this article, the author, a former member of the governing board of Women's Christian College, Chennai, underlines the importance of rethinking the identity and role of Christian colleges in the new circumstances of education resulting from policies of liberalization and entrance of the private sector into the educational field – a field once dominated by Christian minority. He shows that the Christian character of these institutions in fact would overlap with the national policy of inclusive education and educational equity which needs to privilege the poor and discriminated segments of the society. The quality education imparted in the Christian colleges with their distinguished faculty and best of infrastructures should not follow the market-mechanism – a temptation to which they are exposed – but be made available first and foremost to the last and the least so that boys and girls from lowly background turn out to be the best, something fully in keeping with the Christian spirit and identity. This requires a new vision on higher education and leadership of high quality.

India is perhaps the country where most numerous institutions of higher education in the world are to be found – over 30,000 according to some estimates. Universities, arts & science colleges, professional colleges of engineering, medicine, technology, institutes of specialization

spring up in every nook and corner of the country. This exponential growth of higher education in India is the result of new realizations, and a response to the challenges of modern economic growth. The expansion of higher education flows from the conviction that any development today is knowledge-based, and hence the need to prepare human resources through a rigorous process of education. Even with all this expansion, the Gross Educational Ratio (GER) in the country is about 13%, much lower than the developed countries.[1] Since the state is not able to respond to the growing demands for higher education, private providers have entered into the field in a massive way with self-financing colleges and Deemed Universities.[2] In some sectors like engineering and technology, the private providers account for about 80% of all enrolments.

Where do the Christian institutions of higher education stand? Times were when Christian colleges stood tall on the educational landscape of the country. Some of these colleges still have brand-value, but then, they are today dwarfed by private institutions with massive investment, with sterling faculty, state of the art infrastructure facilities, and lush green campuses. It is sad that there has not taken place in the Christian institutions any serious critical reflection as to what is their role in the changed circumstances, what is their vision, and what is their future. They run on old steam, and are bound – if not yet – soon to enter into a critical stage.

In this essay, I would like to make some reflections on the role of these Christian institutions and their possible future direction.

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[1] For comparison with a few other countries, see Semmalar Selvi, "Higher Education Budget: The Impact on Dalits", in this number of *Jeevadhara.*

[2] On the various aspects of present-day educational scenario in the country, see the special issue of *Seminar 624* (August 2011). For many technical aspects of the present-day educational system and its governing see, Pawan Agarwal, *Indian Higher Education. Envisioning the Future,* Sage Publications, Delhi, 2009. See also Andre Beteille, *Universities at the Crossroads,* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2010. See also the very perceptive and experience-based works of V.C. Kulandai Swamy, *Reconstruction of Higher Education in India,* The ICFAI University Press, Agartala, 2006; ID., *Higher Education in India. Crisis in Management,* VIVA Books, Delhi, 2010.

A Historical Premise

There are many prevalent misconceptions and naive simplifications regarding the coming into existence of Christian institutions of higher education. According to one view, they were started in answer to the modern educational policy introduced by the colonial government. It is supposed to respond to what the famous words of T.B. Macaulay outlined in his minutes, namely to create "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect". [3] The implication is that Christian institutions were part of the Westernization project of the colonial rulers. A second view, trivialized by Arun Shourie and the like, would hold that these institutions were but part of the master-plan of Christianizing the whole of India by promoting conversions. The Christian institutions of education would then be part of the joint Christian conspiracy by the British Raj and the missionaries. [4]

But in reality, things were different. It is important to put the Christian initiative in proper perspective and in all its complexity. First of all we need to keep in mind the fact that, historically, there was a heated debate regarding the type of education to be practiced in India. According to one stream of thought – *Orientalists* - education needs to focus on matters indigenous and to be imparted in a classical language like Sanskrit or Persian. This is what was pursued in the first modern institutions of higher education established by the British – Fort William College, Calcutta and College of Fort St George, Madras. Some of the missionaries like William Carey of Serampore (1761 – 1834) was involved in teaching matters Indian – languages, classics, etc. [5] A second school of thought

[3] Macaulay's Minutes of 1835. For the text, see H. Sharp (ed.), *Selection from Education Reports* Part I(1781-1835), Government Printing, Calcutta, 1920. Reprinted by National Achieves of India, Delhi, 1965, pp.107-117.

[4] Cf. Arun Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*, ASA, Delhi, 1994.

[5] Cf. J.T.K.Daniel– R.E. Heduland (eds), *Carye's Obligations and India's Renaissance*, Council of Serampore College, Serampore, 1993.

insisted on the importance of vernacular for education. It may be recalled here that the first Protestant missionaries – Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1683 – 1719) and his companion Heinrich Plütschau (1678 – 1747) of Tranquebar took up the mission of education in the vernacular, and not in English. There was a third school of thought - which finally prevailed and would determine the future course of Indian education: It is the school of "*Anglicists*" who thought of Western model of education and in the English language. This proved very helpful to colonizers who could not manage the empire without the help of loyal "locals" who would fill in clerical positions in bureaucracy and help in administrative works. The Indian elites, without whose staunch support, the British could not rule, ironically, opted not for education in local language and matters indigenous, but for English and Western education. This fact is generally not known. There were numerous petitions signed by thousands asking the government to impart Western education.[6] It suited the interests of colonial rulers to impart Western education, for which anyway there was so much demand, and it spared the impression of any imposition on their part. It then decided to grant funds only for English education along the British model.

Responding to the aspiration for English education, the missionaries on their part, found an opportunity to fulfil their own vision. The Christian schools and colleges were not started as a means for the work of conversion. That would be a gross simplification of history.[7] Rather the missionaries were of the view that India would cast off its superstitions, "idolatry" and other beliefs and customs, once it is enlightened through the introduction of modern science, technology, education, etc. The path of enlightenment would slowly undermine the influence of traditional religions, customs, etc., and lead to understand Christianity and embrace it. Therefore, the colleges and other institutions of higher education were supposed to dispel darkness and bring "civilization". Education was part

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[6]   Cf. Robert 'Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From Beginning to thePresent,* Oxford University Press, New York, 2010.

[7]   Cf. Joshua Kalapati – T. Ambrose Jeyasekaran, *Life and Legacy of Madras Christian College (1837- 1978),* Zha Communications, Chennai, 2010.

of this "civilizing mission". Moreover, the missionaries believed in the trickle-down theory, according to which the education imparted to the elites and high castes would slowly percolate to the lower castes and classes, and would bring about a great change. It is elitism that has, by and large, characterized the history of Christian education. Commenting on this, J.C. Ingel by notes,

> It could be said that because the missionaries tended to concentrate their education on the rich they were unable to make their educational stance sufficiently radical. Education was offered to the higher castes who were then invited to take what *they* wanted from it without having to forgo their essential elitism.[8]

Search for Identity

Christian colleges today are in no way different from others in terms of the courses offered, syllabus, examination, and are subject to all the regulatory norms of the university and educational bodies like UGC, AICTE. What makes them, then, Christian? Do they teach Bible and Christian beliefs to qualify themselves as Christian? These they do not do and cannot do as it would go manifestly against the secular character of education. It would be an unwarranted imposition of a particular religious perspective on students who come from widely different backgrounds and religious affiliations. Are these colleges Christian, because they allow only Christians to enrol themselves and have only Christian faculty? This also is obviously against all facts. In Christian colleges, there are students and faculty who are Hindus, Muslim, Sikhs, Parsis, atheists and others. Are they Christian because they are run by

8   J.C.Ingleby, *Missionaries, Education and India*, ISPCK, Delhi,2000,pp.274-275.

Christian management? Such an administrative reason to qualify an educational institution as Christian would be too external.

To find out the Christian identity we need to look at some of the major issues that confront the field of higher education today. Access, equity, governance, quality, evaluation, research, partnership, financing – these are some of the major issues. Now, the Christian character of a college or institution of higher education would consist in the way it approaches these core issues, and the values it professes in these matters. We will take some of these issues and examine how the Christian character could come into expression. One thing needs to be clear. To be Christian is not an add-on. The approach the Christian institutions will take will be deeply human and social, inclusive and attentive to the needs of the community where it is located. The stronger this approach, the more Christian it will become. Being human and socially conscious in education is not in opposition or parallel to what is being Christian. *There is a correlation between being human and being Christian. The less human and less socially sensitive a college, it is also less Christian even though it carries the label of being a "Christian" institution.*

Education as Common Good

Common good should be the overarching framework and commanding vision for any Christian college. This needs to be underlined in these times when, in the context of a capitalist economy of liberalization, it is viewed more and more as a tradable private good. The relationship of the educational institution and the students becomes one of suppliers and consumers of intellectual goods. In fact, this is what it has become at the international level with WTO entering into education as a tradable service across borders. [9] Closely connected to it is the consideration of

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[9]   Cf. V.T. Patil, *Higher Education in India. The International Engagement,* Authors Press, Delhi, 2010.

knowledge and education for its economic value, and the benefit it could bring in terms of material advancement.

Education is something that should primarily serve the community, the society, the nation. This should take precedence over education as a means to accumulate private gain. In fact, here is an underlying tension in the higher education scene in the country. If there is any doubt on where the priority should lie, this has been made very clear already way back in 1949 by the Radhakrishnan Commission.

> The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. For this purpose, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values.[10]

Drawing on Radhakrishnan Report (1949) and Kothari Commission Report (1964 – 1966), the National Policy on education (1968 & 1986) set the goal of community and national development as the major objective. This community-orientation remains the foundational principle for all educational institutions, and the Christian ones will make their contribution the more they adhere to this foundational policy of national education.

Access and Equity

If we are convinced that education is a common good, it follows that it should be open to everyone in the community and not to remain the privilege of some segments of the society. The dominant educational

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[10] As quoted by Sukhadeo Thorat, "Higher Education in India. Emerging Issues Related to Access,Inclusiveness(Nehru Memorial Lecture)", University of Mumbai, Mumbai, 2006, p. 2.

policies today, on the other hand, seem to create a deep rift between two social groups: the rich and the well-to-do will be the producers and controllers of knowledge in an information-society, whereas the poor will be left to fend for themselves. Such deeply entrenched hierarchical mind-set would think that the poor and the lower castes and classes can be satisfied with literacy and schooling. This pernicious attitude does not allow the opening of the gates of higher education to the marginalized sections.

Access, then, is a major issue in the field of higher education today. How could the Christian character of the institution express itself in the approach to access and equity? For those institutions that are commercially oriented good image is important to be able to attract students and to be able to charge high capitation fees. They claim to provide quality education. For them, admitting students from the poor strata of the society would go against their objectives of profit and image. Elitism gives the image. Since the poor students do not have the financial means, these institutions show least interest in their education and advancement. But this type of orientation goes both against the national policies of education and against Christian principles and values which call us to focus attention on the issue of access and equity. So then, no Christian college can function in the manner of many other private colleges and follow their standards and value-system. Restricting higher education only to the well-to do is neither good for the growth of the country nor is it Christian in spirit. It would contradict the letter and spirit of the national policy of education which speaks of "education for equality". The National Policy on Education of 1986 states unmistakably this goal.

> The new policy will lay special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far. [11]

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[1] *National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992)* Government of India, Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Delhi, 1998, no. 4.1

Statistics unmistakably bear out that the Gross Educational Ratio (GER) for higher education is less for Scheduled Castes. In fact, it is three times less than the general population. Sukhadeo Thorat, former chairman of UGC, with the help of statistics has evidenced this.

> There are also significant differences in enrolment rate among the poor and non-poor. In 1999-2000 the GER [Gross Educational Ratio] for the poor was 2.4% as against 12.91% for non-poor, the average being 10.10%. ..Within the poor however the GER was the lowest among the poor belonging to ST and SC, followed by OBC and others. The GER for poor belonging to ST, SC, OBC and other is 1.55%, 1.89%, 2.30% and 3.58% respectively.[12]

Among the SC, ST, and OBC, wage labourers, rural population and women account for still lower percentage of enrolment. Such being the case, the Christian institutions will follow the positive policies of the state in this regard. Reservation for historically discriminated people is constitutionally guaranteed. If the Christian institutions apply the "constitutional morality" of privileging the traditionally marginalized and excluded, it is sure also to qualify itself as Christian. But then one expects much more from Christian colleges than what is required by law.

The temptation of Christian colleges is to maintain their elitist character by allowing high class groups and not allow any substantial increase in the students from socially and economically marginalized, in spite of the abysmally low percentage of enrolment from dalits, OBC , wage-labourers, slum-dwellers and other such groups.   A few from these categories are admitted as long as there is no danger for the elitist character of the college. Such "Christian colleges" do not deserve to be deemed as Christian, nor do they contribute to the nation by overcoming the disparity in access to higher education. Today the state is more and more withdrawing support to higher education, treating it as tradable good to be paid for by the beneficiaries with the result that the poor get

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[12]   Sukhadeo Thorat, op.cit. p. 9.

thrown out. There is all the more responsibility on the part of Christian colleges to direct their attention to the issue of access and equity.

Creating Opportunities

Closely connected with access is the issue of making opportunities available in the field of higher education. In the country, few are the institutions which offer quality education and excel. As an indicator we may refer here that out of 2698 colleges accredited by NAAC until 2006, 9% fall under this category. There are some institutions which are at the very bottom with abysmal condition of faculty, infrastructure, enrolment etc. They are about 24%. They would seem like extensions of schools, rather than colleges. In between are numerous institutions which are at the middle level with no proper buildings and facilities and wanting in an appropriate environment for teaching and learning, not to speak of research, and they are 66%. Now it is these colleges at the bottom and a few at middle level which are available to the poorer sections of the society. The boys and girls from this segment of the population do not have the means and opportunity to enter into institutions which have distinguished themselves and possess very good facilities.

Now, most of the Christian colleges belong to the institutions which maintain high standards and have sprawling vast campuses and many infrastructure facilities. They wear the image of "elitist". Given the fact that the poorest sections of the students are forced to go to lowest level or mediocre level colleges, with little prospect to get admitted to premier institutions, will the Christian colleges open their doors for these young boys and girls to get quality education? This is how they will create opportunities for the poor to get best education, especially when they do not lack talents. This will be also a manifestation of the Christian identity of the Colleges, where the "Christian" character will be in privileging the poor.

In a country where during millennia people were prevented from learning, and knowledge was thought as the privilege of the high castes and classes, turning to the poor to fill the colleges will signify a great

revolution. It is also challenging, because given the poor background of the students hailing from low social standing and with poor self-image, and wanting in self-confidence, they require greater attention and accompaniment. It demands a lot of dedication and conviction. The Christian educational institution we dream of is one where opportunities will not be wanting to the poor and the marginalized, to the dalits and tribals, children of agricultural labourers, and fisher-people, migrants and refugees, women from the lowest strata of the society. If it is to this kind of people the founder of Christianity has promised nothing less than heaven, should the Christian colleges prevent them from entering into their campuses? With what conviction are the Christian institutions creating opportunities for such people? And what measures are they really taking?

I think it is the duty of Christian institutions of higher education to make available the best of teachers and infrastructure facilities for students from SC/ST and OBC categories, so that these students from humble backgrounds become the best of the best. This will radically transform the present elitist image of most Christian institutions of higher education, and will set new criteria to evaluate educational institutions with reference to what they are in contributing to the education of the marginalized in terms of high quality and standards. I would suggest that an accreditation body to evaluate the Christian colleges with different criteria be set up. This will include definitely the volume of students the colleges enrol from the lowest strata of the society. All Christian colleges will subject themselves to be assessed and accredited by such a body. May be an organization like All India Association for Christian Education (AIACHE) could take up this initiative.

Providing Social and Cultural Capital

For access and opportunities to materialize, students from the lower layers of the society are in need of some pre-requisites: Among other things, they require social and cultural capital. Economic capital is not everything. In fact, one reason why the poor and the marginalized lag

behind is because they lack social and cultural capital. Social capital is the durable network of connections that backs a person or group to move ahead on the path of development. Cultural capital is the situation of a person or group which has acquired certain patterns of life which, as an advantageous predisposition, facilitates their advancement. Inscribed into the social and cultural capital is what is possible and what is impossible.

Let me illustrate the point and make it concrete with some examples. A young girl from a dalit family going for higher studies is faced with many odds. Poverty is one thing. There is more to her deprivation. As her parents, uncles and aunts are all illiterate, she cannot expect any guidance from them for the choice of the course of her studies, and when she has completed her studies the connections to find good jobs. This dalit girl, being the first generation college goer, does not have the advantage of a hereditary social and cultural capital. To give another illustration, if a tribal boy wants to set up a small business and succeed, he needs support in terms of social and cultural capital, quite different from a banya boy – from commercial caste with long tradition in the field and with great connections. In short, the fact of possessing natural aptitudes does not in itself say about what a boy or girl could become. Much depends on the social and cultural capital. A Christian college would be precisely contributing to the inclusive and equitable education when it creates opportunities and steps in where social and cultural capital is wanting.

Moreover accompanying young boys and girls from the lower strata of the society marks a new path in education. For the management, faculty and the leadership of the college it involves entering into the world and society from where these young people come from. It requires a change of method in relating to the world of their experience. In this connection, what Kancha Illaiah narrates about his own experience of higher education is very revealing.

Later, as I pushed my way into the institutions of higher education at various levels, education began to appear more and more brahminical and anglicised... Moreover, the entire scope of education appears irrelevant. None of the skills we have, nothing of the knowledge we possess, have any place in the system. Worse still, our knowledge is rendered non-existent. Our linguistic skills and our vocabulary become invisible. We have been sitting in hostile anglicised and barhminical classroom that had been built only by extracting the surplus generated by our own parents.[13]

In recruitment, Christian colleges will see that socially sensitive scholars are selected as faculty – faculty who will make quality education of the least their mission. When the management, the bureaucracy and the faculty of the college are not convinced and admit grudgingly some students from the poor strata of the society – often as simple tokenism and under pressure – it does not create an inviting atmosphere for the new generation of learners of higher education from poor social background and from rural areas. They would feel at home in a college where their presence is valorized, their talents are acknowledged and fostered. In this way, the existing disparity in the quality of education could be overcome.

Socially and Politically Conscious Higher Education

Economic liberalism anaesthetises social consciousness. Therefore, in a market-driven model of education one may not expect any serious concern for common good or effort to reach out to the marginalized. In keeping with its spirit of pragmatism, this model of education keeps at bay social and political issues. The responsibility towards the community and practice of solidarity could become effective only when deep social consciousness among students and staff is nurtured. The bourgeois higher education of today is politically and socially "illiterate" in spite of all its

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[13]   Kancha Illiah, *Why I Am not a Hindu: Shudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy,* Culture and Political Economy, Samya, Calcutta, 1988, pp. 54 & 56.

mpressive specialisation. The lack of social and political awareness results in teachers and students becoming simple transmitters and recipients of knowledge and information, with no regard to the social significance of the knowledge produced and transmitted. This neglect facilitates the promotion and maintenance of class and caste structures of educational institutions. Is it not then a serious obligation on the part of Christian institutions to instil a critical sense about society, and free the students from the social and political naiveté which the present educational system seems to encourage? More than ever before, a critical social consciousness is required precisely because, through its philosophy of individualism and its consumerist allurement, liberalization functions as a deterrent of social consciousness.

Community-Oriented Researches

Research opens up new possibilities, alternatives, etc and overcomes stagnation. Rightly then it is an important and integral element of higher education. For, no society can progress, no discipline can make any breakthrough without research. Researches in the field of medicine, science and technology amply illustrate this point. The same applies also to arts, humanities and social sciences – something which is not sufficiently recognized.

There are many stakeholders in research who operate with different objectives - academy, industry, defence, market, state etc. The corporate sector, private industries and other enterprises are keen on researches that would enhance their economic potential. As a result, research is tilting towards industry and private enterprises, and the educational institutions, provided with a lot of human resources (faculty, researchers) are drawn into it. As we observed, education is a common good. Consequently, the research in education also needs to be primarily oriented to foster what is good to the community. Could not Christian colleges give a lead and orientation to researches today?

A Christian college will be inspired by the vision of common good in its teaching, research and extension activities, and will be oriented to the

wellbeing of the community. There are so many areas of public life which require knowledge and research for development, change and innovation. Obviously, researches are to be undertaken in the area of science, technology, etc. But we need to be aware of the fact that India is a country with many acute social problems. The resolution of these problems need the support of study and research. The ideal of public good Christian colleges will pursue, is to be shown in the type of socially relevant researches they undertake. Therefore, also the collaboration and partnership Christian colleges seek will be in the first place with those institutions and economic and business enterprises involved in contributing to the good of the community. The perspective of public good, Christian colleges will adopt, will lead them easily to be inclusive in approach, attending to the development of the marginalized section of the community.

As it is, colleges are absorbed in the work of teaching to the general neglect of research. To build up the quality of education and contribute to the wellbeing of the community, Christian colleges need to take seriously multiple sources of knowledge, chief among which is the community. Knowledge is embedded in the community in different forms, and research helps to bring out this knowledge serves common good. Community-oriented researches can challenge and transform the existing social, political, cultural and economic condition of the people for better. Serious researches can also help the formulation of policies of the state and other decision-making bodies in various spheres. In this way, Christian colleges will show the responsibility of higher education towards the growth and development of the community around. It is important that students are guided to choose issues and questions for their research that will have impact for the life of the society and can benefit the people, rather than those researches which will support industry and market for private gain. An education characterized by participatory process, service-learning and problem-solving will also facilitate community-oriented researches.

Unfortunately, the present education fails to prepare young women and men for a future of social and political responsibility and for civic

and democratic participation. Community-oriented education – teaching and research – brings with it a different set of values and ideals. It may appear that such an orientation to education and research in Christian colleges may undermine the "standard" of education which is supposed to be higher the more it is delinked from community and mired in the world of academics. This is far from being true. In fact what I have suggested is a new path in education which Christian colleges can venture and make a mark.

Creative Education

Indian rote learning is proverbial, and it has heavily conditioned our educational system – in its content, method, evaluation, etc. This is one reason why in terms of quality, Indian education is lagging far behind developed countries. Christian colleges will be contributing to the common good, to the national development and the wellbeing of the community, if they decide to move in a more creative direction. One speaks of innovation in education. But that is too little. Innovation – like in the case of fashion – is but many inflections of the same model. We need creative learning which will make the students not simply innovators but inventors. Inventions, as history and experience show are not something that can be learnt. It is a sudden irruption, like the "*eureka*" of Pythagoras. It requires creative learning which the Christian colleges can facilitate. It is learning by search and discovery, and not by repetition or by mere gathering of information, and hence requires a different pedagogy than the prevailing one.

Indigenous Knowledge

Creative education and innovation will happen when we relate to multiple sources of knowledge. Sources of present education system are very limited and are dependent largely on knowledge imported from elsewhere. That is why it is vital that Christian colleges pioneer the promotion of indigenous knowledge as part and parcel of higher education.

At this point we need to clarify the term "indigenous". It has a colonial overtone in as much as it is often contrasted with Western knowledge.

But the point is, as history shows, the term has been used by Europeans as far back as sixteenth century, and it meant the knowledge springing locally from the observations and experience of France, England, Germany etc. in contrast to the "exotic" coming from elsewhere. There was so much insistence on the indigenous herbal tradition and its curative potential against the exotic introduced from India, Egypt, Persia, etc. What Paracelsus, an early modern author from the West, tells about indigenous medicine, provides inspiration for a critical thinking on the present system of education and the need to pay closer attention to the knowledge in front of our "nose" and in our "gardens":

> They want to prepare medicine from across the seas, when there are better remedies to be found in front of their own nose, in their own gardens. Look, dear reader, how contradictory it is that one can see so far that he sees across the seas, but fails to see what is in the earth right in front of him. [14]

We also need to distinguish indigenous knowledge from what was termed as "national education". In reaction to the knowledge of things Western, during the Independence struggle, one insisted on the importance of Indian culture as found in Vedas, Upanishads, and in other sources of "traditional' knowledge.[15] This narrow approach to the national and indigenous is not what is meant here.

The promotion of indigenous knowledge suggested here for Christian colleges rests on other premises, and derives from a broader orientation. It has different presupposition regarding knowledge, its sources and its

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[14]   As quoted in Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous*: *Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p.24.

[15]   Cf. Sabyasachi Bhttacharya et al., *Educating the Nation. Documents on the Discourse of National Education in India 1880 – 1920,* Kanishka Publishers, Delhi, 2003.

nds. Knowledge is not something that is derived from a few elites and pecialists. People and community are resources of knowledge, and today ne has come to realize this more sharply in connection with environmental ssues and sustainable use of the gifts of nature.[16] Indigenous knowledge s, unfortunately, associated with something archaic and not connected vith modern development. A less known but important fact is that the ndigenous knowledge have today a lot of economic potential which need o be tapped. This knowledge embedded in the life and practices of the eople is widely made use of.

> World Bank found that after several decades of massive developmental efforts, two-thirds of the world's population still could not survive without indigenous knowledge of plants, animals, insects, microbes and farming systems (UNDP 1994). The World Health Organization noted that up to 80 per cent of the world's population depends on traditional medicine for its primary health needs (WHO 1998).[17]

Unfortunately, traditional knowledge is underutilized. Education and esearch in Christian colleges need to be community-based. Promoting he knowledge deriving from the community will chart a new terrain in he field of higher education. I would suggest that every Christian college nove towards creating a cell or centre for the study of indigenous nowledge which will interact with various branches of knowledge and epartments in the campus. A principal reason for promotion of indigenous nowledge is the goal of sustainable development to which education eeds to contribute significantly.

Cf. John A. Grim (ed.), *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*, Harvard University Press, CambridgeMA, 2001.

Nirmal Sengupta, *Economic Studies of Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge*, Academic Foundation, Delhi, 2007, p. 22.

Promotion of indigenous knowledge has many problems to face. For one thing, the nature of indigenous knowledge and its transmission has another mode and structure than the ones we are used to. Therefore, in order to bring this knowledge into modern life-stream, one has to grapple with its translatability or rather the interface between indigenous knowledge and modern systems of knowledge. Pursuit of indigenous knowledge helps, among other things, the conservation of biological diversity, eqitable sharing and sustainable use of natural resources. Christian educational institutions orienting themselves to valorize and harness indigenous knowledge will be contributing to these modern goals of development of the entire community.

There is another angle to indigenous knowledge today. Universities and colleges have ceased to become the sole sites for production and dissemination of knowledge and research. A lot of new social movements and civil society engagements are producing first rate knowledge flowing from the rough ground of Indian realities. Think of the feminist movements and environmental movements. These and other similar initiatives are bringing forth a new fund of knowledge, fresh theoretical perspectives and analytical instruments. Here is an opportunity for Christian colleges to forge linkages with these movements and benefit from the knowledge they produce. A greater interaction with these bodies by Christian colleges would be very beneficial and make credible their commitment to indigenous knowledge

Governance - Democratization of Educational Institutions

Let me begin with an observation which would lead us into the heart of the matter of democratization. The management of many Christian colleges – like many other private colleges – set a high price on autonomy, as it gives more freedom, and public recognition and status. That is the point of view of the management. But if you look closely, many of the

Christian colleges which became autonomous, were opposed by the majority of the staff and perhaps even today it is being opposed. In other colleges where the management tries to become autonomous it meets with opposition too. Is it indicative of something? There may be a lot of things hidden behind this posture. But one thing seems to be the fear that the management of the college with autonomous state could become autocratic and the faculty and other staff may lose the sense of freedom they enjoyed. It is a sad reflection on the lack of trust regarding the democratic and participatory mode of functioning of Christian colleges. The critical question is whether the gaining of autonomous status of some of the Christian colleges was followed by greater democratization and greater freedom to the faculty, staff and students.

Like in other areas, education in our country is also very hierarchical and even authoritarian. Starting from the management of institution to faculty's dealing with students reflect strong hierarchical mentality and modes of comport. Democratization is something deeply human as this process respects the dignity, freedom and agency of the other. It goes beyond managerial techniques and mantras. Participatory and democratic practices create an environment of mutual respect and put everyone– management, faculty, staff and students - in the mood of mutual learning.

Christian colleges could become truly an environment where young men and women learn democratic way of life. How could they learn participatory and democratic values if they are faced with a centralized and authoritarian management bent on enforcing a dated concept of discipline, and where everybody is expected to comply with the orders from above? Such dealings in Christian colleges are really shameful. Authoritarian management stunts creativity and undermines the productive human resources. Management, administration and bureaucracy are there to facilitate the most important thing of growth in knowledge and creative learning.

Participatory management of Christian institutions of higher education becomes effective when it is practiced in *planning, implementation* and *evaluation.* Planning together involving the talents of everyone in the campus will enrich the educational process and will bring about a sense of responsibility among faculty, staff and students. Decentralization in implementation will contribute to build up mutual trust, and readiness to be critically evaluated – be it the management, the faculty or staff. It will contribute to constant reform and growth of the institution. Democratic and participatory practices in all the three areas will cumulatively create an environment of growth for all concerned.

Conclusion - New Leadership in Higher Education

Though Christian community was once in the forefront of education, today the institutions it runs woefully fail in vision and leadership. Christian colleges could contribute today by assuming leadership role in higher education. What would that imply? The important thing for Christian institutions is not simply to do the things which others are already doing. It is not even a matter of trying to do a little better what the state and other private educational providers are doing. Leadership means something more. The point is to do those things which others do not do, or which they declare as their intent, but do not in fact realize. This kind of leadership could come about only when there is a new vision about higher education. Christian colleges should not fall prey to the market which operates on the basis of demand and supply.

Educational leadership demands swimming against the current. Could Christian colleges take poor students from lower echelons of the society, provide quality education and turn the college into a premier institution? Only people with vision, creativity and leadership could achieve this. For it goes beyond simple management and administration. To play the game of market in the educational field is relatively easy. Christian colleges

need men and women of great leadership who will break the conventional market-mechanism and move in new directions in the field of education. Ultimately, Christian leadership in education – like Christian identity – is not anything exotic; it has to do with the way the leadership of a college approaches the crucial issues affecting education today. It is a way that is respectful of the human, sensitive to the needs of the community and its inclusive growth and flourishing. To the extent a college pursues these goals consistently, it will also discover its new Christian identity.

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Statement about Ownership and other Particulars
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I, J.Constantine Manalel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Editorial

The theme of the present issue of *Jeevadhara* is "Leadership: Biblical Perspectives." As we live in a fast changing world, the old models of leadership – "hierarchical" or "control from above" or "static and unchangeable structures" – are becoming out-dated and irrelevant. We are called to look for new paradigms of leadership which will be more life-giving and dynamic, which enable us to respond to the challenges of our changing times and their new issues and questions. Can the Bible (the biblical stories or biblical leaders) shed light on this important role?

In this issue of *Jeevadhara*, we have chosen five major sections from the Bible to explore the biblical model of leadership. We ask questions like: What kind of leadership emerges from these biblical texts. Whom do we consider a dynamic leader according to the biblical tradition? What are the characteristics of a biblical leader? How do the biblical leaders challenge us to become more inspiring and empowering leaders for our times?

One of the well-known biblical leaders is Moses. James B. Dabhi asks the question whether Moses can be interpreted as a paradigmatic leader for our times. The author then rereads the long journey of Moses who gradually became the instrument of God to liberate the people of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, focusing on the various features of Moses' leadership. Finally, taking into consideration both the context of Moses as well as that of the contemporary world, the author arrives at an affirmative answer that Moses can be interpreted as an exemplary leader for moderns.

Wisdom literature preserves some of the popular traditions and wise sayings of the biblical tradition, which incorporated values and proverbs from the non-Israelite culture of neighbouring societies. Simon Kaipuram looks at the leadership motif in Wisdom Literature. The author examines the qualities of the sages and leaders of the community such as tribal elders, scribal counsellors, wise women, priests and prophets in general, and King Solomon in particular, and presents integrity of character, practical wisdom and commitment to social justice as the trademark of authentic leaders.

Biblical prophets have played an important role in developing the biblical understanding of leadership. Joy Philip Kakkanattu presents biblical prophets as transformative leaders. As divinely called and authorized, the biblical prophets dare to critically analyse society, stand for the cause of the less privileged, correct deviations, and try to build up an alternative system. They are rooted in their God experience and guided by the demands of the covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel. The biblical prophets make their own the sufferings and concerns of the people whom they represent. The way of life and radical commitment of the prophets to the mission of God is a source of inspiration and a wake-up call for the leaders of the Church and modern society.

The Gospel of John differs significantly from the synoptic tradition in its presentation of Christology and Ecclesiology as well as in its understanding of discipleship and leadership. Rekha M. Chennattu explores the Johannine understanding of leadership, reinterpreting the footwashing event in John 13 from a new perspective, against the background of the Old Testament covenant motifs. The author argues that by washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus inaugurated a "new world", a new community of "friends" – a new covenant community. Just as in the case of the covenant relationship in the Old Testament, keeping the commandments is an indispensable condition for being friends of Jesus since the call to be Jesus' friends is followed by a conditional clause, "You are my friends, if you do what I command

you" (v. 14). When he called his disciples friends, Jesus was eradicating the inequality that naturally existed between the master and the disciples, and inaugurating a covenant-model of relationship and leadership. The author then explores the meaning and implications of the covenant-model of leadership for our times.

Our investigation of biblical leadership would be incomplete without exploring the Letters of Paul. Thomas Manjali investigates the Pauline model of leadership and its challenges for us. What we have in the Letters is a transformative model of leadership, practised by Paul. He conceived leadership primarily as a relationship which inspires, enables, builds bridges and builds up communities. Paul had a vision and passion for mission; he is the champion of collaboration with men and women of good will and commitment as well as a pioneering dialogue partner with people of other faiths and traditions. He delegated authority to his co-workers /collaborators and gave them freedom with responsibility, while assigning various functions to them. His leadership was rooted in a God experience which transformed himself, his collaborators and the people whom they served in different communities.

A paradigm of leadership emerges from all these different models of biblical leaders from Moses in the Old Testament to Paul in the New Testament. What is common to all of them is that leadership begins in the mind of God, and it is God who takes the initiative to choose us as leaders. God invites us to become co-workers with God. Leadership is therefore rooted in an experience of God which empowers the leaders to become free to delegate power to their collaborators and treat them as equal covenant partners in God's mission. The primary concern of biblical leadership is social transformation – the welfare of all the members as individuals and as communities. Personal integrity, concern for social justice, practical wisdom, and broad vision of the leaders, coupled with the space and freedom given to all the members to play their unique role in the building up of more just and humane communities, are characteristics of biblical leadership.

I do hope that this issue will in some way inspire the readers to appropriate the biblical models of leadership; to emulate the example of biblical leaders; and to become empowering and life-giving leaders in the Church and in society.

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Can Moses be Interpreted as a Paradigmatic Leader?

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Posing an intriguing question, "Can Moses be interpreted as a paradigmatic leader?" the author peruses the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy as a formalist reader. Establishing concord with the narrator, who disperses salient features of Moses' character as a leader throughout the writings of the above mentioned books, the author culls seven of them under the headings humaneness, commitment to the cause, principle of subsidiary, dwelling in the presence of God, mediation, interceding with God, and listening to the followers. Evaluating Moses' leadership in Moses' own context, the author interprets Moses as a paragon leader. Associating the context of Moses with that of the contemporary world, the author ends his project with an affirmative answer that Moses can be interpreted as a paradigmatic leader for modern leaders.

Introduction

Amram, an Israelite from the tribe of Levi, married his father's sister Jochebed, while they sojourned in Egypt (see Exod 2:1; 6:20). During the Israelites' persecution, which was perpetrated by Pharaoh Seti I (1294-1279 B.C.),[1] this couple begot a son, who was left by his mother in a basket in the midst of reeds on the bank of river Nile. This

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[1] Michael D. Coogan dates the exodus sometime in the thirteenth century B.C., based on the mention of the name "Israel" in a hymn on a victory stele erected by Pharaoh Merneptah (1213-1203 B.C.) after a campaign in Syria and Canaan. From the date of the exodus, Coogan computes that Pharaoh Merneptah's father Pharaoh Rameses II (1279-1213 B.C.) must have ruled at the time of the exodus and Pharaoh Merneptah's

abandoned child was rescued by the princess cf Egypt. She named him Moses and reared him as her own son (see Exod 2:2-10). From this point on, the character of Moses dominates the four books of the Pentateuch, namely, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The ascendancy of Moses terminates with his demise at the ripe age of one hundred and twenty years, in the land of Moab, outside the Promised Land (see Deut 34:5-7). According to Exod 7:7, Moses was eighty years old when he, as per the dictates of God, encountered Pharaoh Rameses II (1279-1213 B.C.), demanding emancipation of the Israelites. (The death of Pharaoh Seti I, the perpetrator of persecution, is noted in Exod 2:23a.) Thus, the last one third of Moses' lifespan presents him as a busy character, involved in negotiating with the pharaoh, encouraging the Israelites, confronting the offenders in the wilderness community, pleading for the punishable people, practising the principle of subsidiary in governance, defeating enemies, mediating between God and God's chosen race, and communicating constantly with God. Moses' active participation, in becoming an instrument of the Israelites' liberation from the slavery in Egypt to the freedom of an independent nation on the way to procure the Promised Land, reveals various facets of his leadership.

1. Humaneness

Texts written over the span of six centuries or so, by at least four groups of authors, at different locales, under diverse contexts, characterize in almost unison the salient features of Moses' leadership.[2] The character of Moses possesses humane qualities, such as humility

grandfather Pharaoh Seti I (1294-1279 B.C.) must have begun the oppression and forced labor of the Israelites. See Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98-99. R. F. Johnson adds that if the exodus is to be dated in the early thirteenth century B.C., then the Egyptian dynasty involved would be that of the Ramessides (Nineteenth Dynasty 1308-1216 B.C.), who are known to have permitted appeals from their slaves. In the same period, the Egyptian capital was relocated in the Delta area at Avaris, the vicinity of the Israelites' settlement (Gen 46:28-34; Exod 2:5-10). Hence, Moses' movements between the palace and the Israelites' enclave would be possible. See R.F. Johnson, "Moses" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia,* vol. 3, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, Samuel Terrien, and Emory Stevens Bucke (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 445.

[2] With regard to the authorship of the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, I resonate with the view held by the majority scholars. The view is

(e.g., "Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth" Num 12:3),[3] altruism (e.g., when God apprised Moses that the latter would not usher the Israelites into the Promised Land, Moses responded requesting God for a new shepherd, instead of demurring, see Num 27:12-23), leadership (e.g., "These are the stages by which the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt in military formation under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Moses wrote down their starting points, stage by stage, by command of the Lord" Num 33:1-2a), leadership from the front (e.g., "The Lord said to me, "Get up, go on your journey at the head of the people, that they may go in and occupy the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them" Deut 10:11), assertiveness (e.g., "You must diligently observe everything that I (Moses) command you; do not add to it or take anything from it" Deut 12:32), respect for others' freedom (e.g., "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live" Deut 30:19), Theo-centeredness (e.g., "This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the Israelites before his death" Deut 33:1), and nonpareil (e.g., "He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land" Deut 34:11).

2. Commitment to the Cause

The call narrative in Exod 3:1- 4:17 reveals the clay that Moses is composed of. God constitutes one party and Moses the other in the prolonged parley. The narrator locates the exchanges between these two partners beyond the wilderness of Sin, at the foot of the Mount Horeb/Sinai, in the southern peninsula of Israel. The call narrative has a rhythm, viz., God articulates, Moses responds, and the exchange ends.

known as the Documentary Hypothesis. The Documentary Hypothesis states that four sources, viz., Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly (P), composed the above mentioned four books that depict the character of Moses. Julius Wellhausen established the chronology of JEDP. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 9-10.

[3] All the biblical quotes in this project are from *The Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2003).

The narrator depicts a series of eight such exchanges to construct the call narrative.

In exchange one (see Exod 3:2-4a), God appears to Moses in a burning bush, initiating a nonverbal exchange. Since the burning bush was not consumed, Moses becomes curious to witness this unnatural phenomenon and brings himself to the close vicinity of God, rendering a nonverbal reply. I evaluate exchange one positive. In exchange two (see Exod 3:4b), God addresses Moses and the latter responds, "Here, I am," intimating his attentive status. I grade exchange two positive. In exchange three (see Exod 3:5-6), God introduces the self of God as the God of Moses' ancestors. At this self-disclosure of God, Moses hides his face. The narrator mentions that fear of God compelled Moses to do so. Scholars may evaluate Moses positively,[4] but I count Moses' gesture as an expression of his unwillingness to persevere in the conversation that has just commenced. He has come closer to observe the blazing yet not consuming bush; surely, not to encounter his ancestral deity. I term exchange three negative. Ostensibly, Moses wants to short-circuit the dialogue, yet God pursues him with exchange four (see Exod 3:7-11), specifying a mission for Moses: "So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." In reply, Moses articulates the disparity that subsists between the oppressor, the tyrannical pharaoh of Egypt, and him, an insignificant shepherd of Midian. This hard-core chasm adduced by Moses evinces his negative response. In exchange five (see Exod 3:12-13), God assures Moses that God will accompany him to make him on a par with the pharaoh and also betokens the success of Moses' manumission. In response, Moses conjectures a

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[4] For instance, Terence E. Fretheim claims that Moses knows that seeing God may mean death. This response shows that Moses is familiar with the religious heritage of his ancestors. See Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. James Luther Mays, Patrick D. Miller Jr., and Paul J. Achtemeier (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 55-56.

So, too, Walter Brueggemann informs the reader that to see God is to impinge upon God's holiness and freedom. Thus, Moses' act of submissive deference is undertaken so that God's sovereignty is not crowded. See Walter Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Leander E. Keck, Thomas G. Long, Bruce C. Birch, Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, William L. Lane, Gail R. O'Day, David L. Petersen, John J. Collins, Jack A. Keller Jr., James Earl Massey, and Marion L. Soards (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 712.

hypothetical scenario wherein he approaches the Israelites and the latter inquires about the name of God. Since Moses is commissioned to go to the pharaoh, whereas Moses is contemplating his going to the Israelites, I term his imagination negative.[5] Notwithstanding, God continues and enters into exchange six (see Exod 3:14-4:1), revealing God's name, modifying God's plan by involving the Israelites' elders in having an audience with the pharaoh, and asserting that the pharaoh will let the Israelites go. In response, Moses expresses a suspicion that the Israelites may neither believe him nor listen to him. Raising doubts and surmising an unfavorable ambiance betray the negative mindset of Moses.[6] To convince Moses that the Israelites will acknowledge him, coming as an emissary of God with God's power, in exchange seven (see Exod 4:2-10), God invests him with three supernatural signs, viz., the staff becoming a snake, the hand becoming leprous, and water from the river Nile becoming blood. Witnessing and experiencing the first two preternatural signs, Moses now focuses on his own self and exposes his speech impediment as an obstacle in carrying out his task. I evaluate his encumbrance, which could be a genuine one, as his negative response.[7] God induces Moses by initiating exchange eight (see Exod 4:11-13), revealing God's might to remove any type of speech impediment that Moses may have and obtruding upon Moses to embark on his mission. In reply, Moses solicits for a substitute, begging, "O my Lord, please send someone else." I count exchange eight negative. At the conclusion of exchange eight, God continues, entertaining no other response from Moses, save he leave for Egypt. God sends no one in lieu of Moses, but accommodates his urging with appointing Aaron to go with him as his mouthpiece.

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[5] Fretheim has a different take on this exchange. Moses understands that his mission to go to the pharaoh entails his going to the Israelites. However, the Israelites have not acknowledged his leadership; hence, he has to go to the elders of the Israelites first. See Fretheim, *Exodus,* 63.

[6] John I. Durham elucidates that Moses' status with the Israelites was questionable to begin with. A fugitive with a clouded reputation, Moses had left Egypt under sentence of death. Besides, he had been away for a long time. See John I. Durham, *Exodus,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, Ralph R. Martin, James W. Watts, and Lynn Allan Losie (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987), 44.

The narrator displayed a picturesque call narrative by marshalling it in eight exchanges. After the initial two exchanges, Moses consistently negated any proposal that God made. His constant refusal impels me to brand him a stubborn character. Stubbornness may sound a chink in Moses' armor, but the same stubbornness would prevail over Pharaoh Rameses II, as Moses would remain adamant in encountering the pharaoh through plague after plague. Exodus 7-12 narrates how the hardness of the pharaoh's heart to recognize God's hand wanes at each successive plague and how the determination of Moses' mind to liberate the Israelites waxes in inverse proportion. To be committed to the cause of humanity, at the behest of divinity, constitutes the prime quality of Moses as a leader of masses.

3. Principle of Subsidiary

To execute leadership most efficiently and effectively, the head needs to employ the principle of subsidiary. The leader must address the personal grievances of individual and the communal discords of masses. Undertaking such a task single-handedly might wear out both the leader and the followers. Sagacious father-in-law of Moses has this insight, observing the busy schedule of Moses as judge. So, his father-in-law counsels him to delegate his responsibility with authority (see Exod 18:13-23).[8] Moses heeds this wise counsel and appoints able Israelites, "And they judged the people at all times, hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves" (Exod 18:26). A variant rendition of appointing wise, discerning and reputable judges appears in Deut 1:9-18. Here, the narrator augments the previous account by the confession of Moses' inability, "I am unable by myself to bear you" (Deut 1:9b), and Moses' act of taking the Israelites into confidence for his project of delegating his authority to deserving

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[7] Brueggemann, too, feels that Moses' objection, concerning his own speech, sounds more like the making of excuses. See Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 716

[8] Fretheim opines that Moses is presented as a somewhat inept administrator. Moses' experience of redemption did not immediately endow him with efficient and creative administrative skills. See Fretheim, *Exodus*, 198.

Apropos of the principle of subsidiary, Brueggemann writes: "Moses seems not to have much common sense about administrative matters." Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 827.

candidates, the project that the Israelites approve, stating, "The plan you have proposed is a good one" (Deut 1:14b).

On another occasion, in the context of the Israelites' wailing, at the instigation of the rabble, for having to eat the same manna daily (see Num 11:4-10), Moses vents his exhaustion, sighing, "I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me" (Num 11:14). Sympathizing with Moses, God shares some of the spirit that was bestowed on Moses with the seventy elders of the Israelites. These elders render their helping hand to the main leader Moses (Num11:24-30).[9]

4. Dwelling in the Presence of God

A divinely appointed leader must dwell in the presence of God in order to imbibe the values and virtues of the divine. To paraphrase the same notion, a religious leader has to emulate God, the most ideal leader. Moses is invited by God to be in the presence of God, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there" (Exod 24:12a). "Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain" (Exod 24:15). In Hebrew symbolism, the cloud represents the presence of God.[10] The duration of Moses' sojourn with God amounts to forty days and forty nights (see Exod 24:18). Number forty constitutes a biblical number, symbolizing typical length of a generation. The understanding provided by M. H. Pope[11] I stretch a bit further to postulate that number

[9] Thomas B. Dozeman explicates the type of leadership that emerges among the Israelites. Just as Num 11:25 is precise about the mantic behavior of the seventy elders; it is equally explicit in stating that their behavior ceases. On the one hand, the narrator emphasizes the importance of charismatic and prophetic leadership in the wilderness community; on the other hand, the narrator does not want the charismatic leadership to be uncontrolled. Thus, the prophetic frenzy that overtakes the seventy elders and authenticates them is momentary and is not repeated. Eldad and Medad represent the unpredictable side of charismatic leadership and, hence, a challenge to the orderly control of the spirit of Moses in Num 11:24-25. Moses states that he does not hoard his own charismatic power; indeed, he wishes that all the Israelites were prophets. See Thomas B. Dozeman, "The Book of Numbers: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible,* vol. 2, ed. Thomas G. Long et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 107-108.

[10] Durham informs the reader that the cloud that concealed the mountain, from the midst of which God called out to Moses, and into the midst of which Moses went is a special symbol in Exodus of divine guidance, divine communication, and divine Presence. See Durham, *Exodus,* 346.

[11] M.H. Pope expounds that number 40 is a symbolic and sacred number. Number 40 is used as a round number to designate a fairly long period of time in terms of human

forty may signify complete appropriation of the teaching and wisdom of the master by his disciple. That means, if a disciple sits at the feet of the master for forty days and forty nights, the disciple may acquire all the knowledge and wisdom that her/his master has.

Whenever Moses came into the presence of God, God conversed with him most intimately. "When Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. . . . Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exod 33:9, 11a). On their journey from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land, Miriam and Aaron once protested the primacy proffered to Moses, complaining "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" (Num 12:2a) and declared themselves to be on a par with Moses, claiming "Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num 12:2a). In front of Miriam and Aaron, God countenances Moses, citing the privileged relationship that God has with Moses. God communicates with other prophets through the media of a vision and a dream, but with Moses God converses without any intermediation. God acknowledges that "With him I speak face to face–clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord" (Num 12:8).[12] Another version of

existence or endurance. Forty years is the approximate length of a generation. A human being was full grown at forty (see Exod 2:11). The forty-year period in the wilderness (see Exod 16:35; Deut 2:7; 8:2; 29:5) was long enough for a whole generation to die off (see Num 14:33; 32:13). The forty-year reigns of David, Solomon, and Joash (see 2 Sam 5:4; 1 Kgs 2:11; 11:42; 2 Chr 24:1) are proof of divine favor. Forty days or years was the common duration of critical situation, punishment, fasting, repentance, and vigil (see Gen 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6; Exod 24:18; 34:28; Num 13:25; Deut 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10). Forty lashes was the maximum flagellation (see Deut 25:3). See M. H. Pope, "Number: Numbering: Numbers," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* 565.

[12] According to Dozeman, the phrase "face to face" occurs only in Num 12:8. The point of the divine oracle is that such direct communication with God is beyond that of prophets. Moses' charismatic authority transcends traditional categories. See Dozeman, "The Book of Numbers" in *The New Interpreter's Bible,* 110.

In Durham's opinion, the phrase "face to face" is to be understood as an idiom of intimacy, not as a reference to theophany. See Durham, *Exodus,* 443.

For Philip J. Budd, the phrase "face to face" seems to communicate a unique immediacy and directness about revelation to Moses. See Philip J. Budd, *Numbers,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol.3, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin (Nashville: Thomas nelson Publishers, 1984), 137.

Moses' trait to remain in the presence of God stresses the hearing activity of Moses, e.g., "When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the covenant from between the two cherubim" (Num 7:89a). At one spot (see Exod 34:5-9),[13] the narrator notes what transpires between God and Moses. God discloses the self of God to Moses: God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. In response, Moses begs God's pardon for the iniquity of the Israelites, indicting his own self as an accomplice in their transgression, "Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and sin, and take us for your inheritance" (Exod 34:9b). Moses manifests a unique quality of a religious leader to remain in constant communion with God, to speak to God, to listen to God, and to intercede with God on behalf of the flock entrusted to him.

5. Mediation

A religious leader must mediate between God and God's people to let God's will prevail. God counts the Israelites as God's own people (e.g., "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt" Exod 3:7a). God appoints Moses to mediate for God's people (e.g., "So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt" Exod 3:10). The event of crossing the Reed Sea demonstrates Moses' indomitable quality of mediating between God and the Israelites. Exodus 14:10-18 depicts the context of the chase made by the Egyptians for the Israelites, who were going out of Egypt. Entailing the Egyptians' chase, the Israelites opt to return to the slavery rather than to die; God wants the Israelites to move forward and live rather than to return to the slavery. The Israelites' compulsion and God's interest crisscross. Moses needs to mediate in such a tactful way that the will of God prevail over that of the Israelites. Moses listens to the Israelites' laments and God's programme, persuades the Israelites to be still and to let God operate, and on his part he places his trust in God's power. Moses functions as per the injunction of God, "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea" (Exod 14:21a). Consequently, the Israelites pass from the bondage over to liberation, "The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the

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[13] Brueggemann holds that God's speech in Exod 34:6-7 is God's self-disclosure, revealing to Moses the fullness of God's character and intentionality. Nowhere before this speech has anyone been privileged to hear directly a disclosure of God's own life. See Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible,* 946.

waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left" (Exod 14:22).

As the history unfolds, eventually, even the Israelites accept Moses as their mediator with God (e.g., "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die" Exod 20:19). Another rendition of Moses' role as the mediator appears in autobiographical format, "At that time I was standing between the Lord and you to declare to you the words of the Lord, for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain" (Deut 5:5). Thus, both parties, between whom Moses mediates, accept him unequivocally (see Deut 5:24-31). Moses functions as the mediator of the bilateral covenant between God and the Israelites, too (see Exod 24:3-8).[14] Moses serves as the mouthpiece of God, announcing God's ordinances to the Israelites. The acquiescence of the Israelites to comply with the ordinances leads Moses to initiate a series of actions, such as writing down the ordinances, erecting an altar to represent God[15] and twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes of the Israelites, dashing half portion of blood upon the altar, reading the ordinances out to the Israelites, receiving the Israelites' consent to obey them, sprinkling the remainder blood on the Israelites, and pronouncing "See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Exod 24:8). The effect of Moses' role as the mediator was evinced on his face, which began shining after encountering God (see Exod 34:32-35).[16] The mediator Moses faithfully communicates God's command to the Israelites to conclude their long sojourn in the wilderness of Sinai and proceed towards the wilderness of Paran ("They set out for the first time at the command of the Lord through Moses" Num 10:13).

6. Interceding with God

The Israelites invariably fail to remain faithful to God. God had commanded, "You shall not make for yourself an idol . . . You shall not

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[14] Fretheim does not agree with the title "mediator" employed for Moses in Exod 24:3-8. This disagreement is because of Moses' actions that seem not to entail more than that of a faithful priest. See Fretheim, *Exodus,* 259.

[15] Fretheim does not agree with the title "mediator" employed for Moses in Exod 24:3-8. This disagreement is because of Moses' actions that seem not to entail more than that of a faithful priest. See Fretheim, *Exodus,* 259.

[16] For Durham, the altar represents the presence of God in the midst of the Israelites. See Durham, *Exodus,* 343.

bow down to them or worship them" (Exod 20:4-5a). After stipulating these statutes, God invited Moses to go up the mountain; in response, "Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights" (Exod 24:19b) to receive the two tablets of the covenant (see Exod 31:18). During Moses' protracted absence amidst them at the foot of Mount Sinai, the Israelites became restive and, consequently, coerced Aaron to make gods for them. Succumbing to their coercion, Aaron casts an image of gold calf, which the Israelites worship (see Exod 32:1-6). God announces to Moses God's verdict apropos of the Israelites' transgression: "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them" (Exod 32:9b-10a). Moses remembers with gratitude the great exodus that God has wrought with God's might and the solemn promise of progeny and property that God has vowed to the patriarchs. He implores God, pleading, "Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people" (Exod 32:12b). Later, after reprimanding the Israelites for their dis-obedience to God's instruction, Moses returns to God once again to deplore the grave aberration that the Israelites have indulged in. Moses leaves just two options at God's disposal: either forgive the Israelites or blot his name out.[17] At that moment God relents and instructs, "But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; see, my angel shall go in front of you" (Exod 32:34a). Moses succeeds in getting relieved of God's anger vis-à-vis the Israelites' despicable idolatry. Another account of Moses' intercession for the iniquity of gold calf worship in Deut 9:8-21,

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[17] Brueggemann points out that Moses' appeal in Exod 32:32 is structured as a double "if." However, the structure fails with the first "if." There should be a protasis and an apodosis, "if . . . then." But Moses can think of nothing to say that will balance the possibility of the first "if." It is on the second "if" that the force of the rhetoric falls. Moses stands in complete solidarity with the recalcitrant Israelites. See Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible,* 933-934.

Durham, too, brings to the notice of the reader that in a phrase that seems awkwardly incomplete in Hebrew (either a word has dropped out or the narrator is attempting to represent Moses having difficulty saying what he wants to say), Moses asks God to forgive the Israelites or to erase his own name from the book. The book apparently refers to a register of those loyal to God and thereby deserving God's special blessing (see Ps 69:28). Moses' petition dramatizes both the seriousness of the Israelites' sin and the impossibility of the healing of relationship by anyone save those who have compromised it. See Durham, *Exodus,* 432.

25-29 supplies the parameter of time that Moses devotes in pacifying God ("Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water" Deut 9:18a).[18] Praying and fasting on behalf of the adherents to avert an impending cataclysm constitutes a paramount quality of a religious leader.

Leaving the foot of Mount Sinai, the Israelites wade through the wilderness of Paran (see Num 10:12). Their hardships multiply on their way, inciting them to whine. Their complaints enkindle the fierce anger of God. Moses intervenes on behalf of the Israelites and God's wrath is abated. This place is named Taberah, where Moses interceded for the wailing Israelites (see Num 11:1-3). At Hazeroth, maybe on account of sibling rivalry, Miriam and Aaron disparage Moses, igniting God's wrath. Miriam, but not Aaron, is punished severely by God with the dreaded disease of leprosy (see Num 12:1-10). Moses supplicates for Miriam, beseeching, "O God, please heal her" (Num 12:13). God heals Miriam after seven days of ostracism.[19] Moses exhibits magnanimity in praying even for those who criticize him out of jealousy. At Kadesh, in the wilderness of Paran, the twelve spies that were sent into the land of Canaan bring to the Israelites inimical tidings, reporting, "The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size" (Num 13:32b). Such appalling announcements deterred the Israelites from venturing in to occupy the Promised Land. They wished to replace their captain by the one who could lead them back to Egypt. The magnitude of the Israelites' wailing and weeping could be measured by the expletive gesture of their leaders, "Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the Israelites" (Num 14:5).[20] In defence of their

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[18] Ronald E. Clements claims that had it not been for the intercession of Moses, the Israelites would have perished. Moses has placed his own self between God and the Israelites and had been willing to die with them, rather than see everything that had been promised come to nothing. The account of Moses' intercession appears to be given twice in Deut 9:18-19 and Deut 9:25-29. See Ronald E. Clements, "The Book of Deuteronomy: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection," in *The New Interpreter's Bible,* vol. 2, ed. Thomas G. Long et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 362-363.

[19] Budd notes that Miriam is to be excluded from the camp for a period of time may mean that she has been healed at once, in response to the prayer of Moses. The failure to mention healing and subsequent inspection suggests that Moses' prayer is normally effective at once. See Budd, *Numbers,* 137.

[20] Apropos of the prostration, Dozeman writes: "When this ritual action takes place

leaders, when two of the spies produced a favourable report of the spied territory, the Israelites threatened to stone them. God is filled with fury at what transpires in this meeting at Kadesh. God spews God's anger, menacing, "I will strike them with pestilence and disinherit them" (Num 14:12a). Promptly, Moses distracts God from executing God's fierce anger, stating that other nations would interpret that the annihilation of the Israelites by God had ensued from God's inability to bring to the fruition what God had envisaged. Moses urges God, imploring, "Forgive the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt even until now" (Num 14:19). God forgives the Israelites, but bars all those, who rebelled against God's plan at Kadesh, from entering into the Promised Land. Again, by the way to the Reed Sea, in the wilderness, the Israelites lamented for food and water. Both God and Moses became the butt of the Israelites' direct assault. The snakebite in that wilderness caused the death of many Israelites. The narrator associates the attack of the Israelites on God and Moses with the subsequent death of the Israelites as cause and effect (see Num 21:4-9). At this calamity of many deaths, Moses intercedes for the Israelites, who have realized now their misdemeanor. God listens to Moses' prayer and makes the snakebite nonfatal.

7. Listening to the Followers

Moses as a leader listens to what his followers have to convey to him. The idea of sending out spies to the land to be conquered had been proposed to Moses by the Israelites themselves (see Deut 1:22-25). Moses heeded the Israelites and implemented their proposal, as Moses later acknowledges, "The plan seemed good to me, and I selected twelve of you, one from each tribe" (Deut 1:23). Numbers 27:1-11 cites another instance of Moses' listening aptitude. A certain man from the clan of Manasseh expired, leaving his five daughters alone. These daughters stake a claim in front of Moses, demanding, "Give to us a possession among our father's brothers" (Num 27:4b). Since these daughters raise an intriguing question ("Why should the name of our

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before the congregation, it signifies anger as a response to murmuring." Dozeman, "The Book of Numbers," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 124.

According to Budd, prostration averts immediate wrath, holding up the flow of events, thereby giving Joshua and Caleb opportunity to argue their case. See Budd, *Numbers*, 156.

father be taken away from his clan because he had no son?" Num 27:4b),[21] the reader may rightly surmise a societal dispensation, wherein the inheritance passed from father to son in a patrilineal way. Accordingly, Deut 21:17 depicts the prerogative of the firstborn son. Moses lends a sympathetic ear to the daughters, consults God, and grants them the right over their patrimony. On yet another occasion, the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Gad approach Moses with a request that, instead of making them cross the river Jordan,[22] they be permitted to occupy the land on the east of river Jordan because they possess much livestock. Moses pays attention to them. He makes these two tribes cognizant of the duty devolving on them towards the remaining tribes to assist them in conquering the land on the west of river Jordan. Upon receiving the consent of the tribes of Reuben and Gad to fulfill their obligation, Moses allows them to appropriate the eastern territory (see Num 32:1-33). Listening to his followers, Moses could usher in a lease of new life in terms of land for the wandering Israelites and inheritance for the orphan daughters.

8. Moses can be Interpreted as a Paradigmatic Leader

Humility, altruism, leading from the front, assertiveness, respect for the followers' freedom, Theo-centeredness, and nonpareil, such

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[21] Dozeman informs the reader that the problem of inheritance, which the daughters present, is not covered in any of the existing law codes. This story is one of only four stories in which an ambiguous legal situation requires special revelation for its solution; the other three stories are the case of the blasphemer (Lev 24:10-23), the second Passover (Num 9:6-14), and Sabbath law (Num 15:32-36). See Dozeman, "The Book of Numbers," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 217.

Moses has no immediate reply to the request of the daughters. Budd interprets Moses' inability as his ignorance, or his punishment for his sin, or a sign of his humility, or an example to future judges on matters of which they are uncertain. See Budd, *Numbers*, 301-302.

[22] Dozeman instructs that the Hebrew verb "to cross" is more than a description of travel, especially when used in conjunction with the River Jordan. In such instances, the verb "to cross" signifies conquest. Moses interprets the request of the Reubenites and the Gadites as a desire to inherit the land without participating fully in holy war. Moses warns that holy war requires the participation of all the Israelites (see Num 32:6-15), to which the Reubenites and the Gadites propose a solution (see Num 32:16-19). Moses formalizes the proposed solution into law (see Num 32:20-24), to which the Reubenites and the Gadites agree (see Num 32:25-27). See Dozeman, "The Book of Numbers," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 249.

qualities make anyone first and foremost humane and eventually an imitable leader. All these virtues enable Moses to establish an intimate relationship with the compassionate God, on one hand, and a cordial rapport with the oppressed Israelites, on the other hand. Thus, Moses forms a nexus between God and the Israelites. Contemporary world aspires to have leaders in the mould of Moses, who opts for God and sides with the marginalized. Moses seems to practise the maxim 'contemplative in action,' which could prove ideal for any modern day leader.

The Israelites' persecution at the hands of the arrogant pharaoh and their slavery in the superpower Egyptian empire constitute the context of Moses' leadership. The daunting task outlined before him seems insurmountable. Through his stubbornness, Moses exacts God to disclose all the facets of the mammoth mission that he has been entrusted. Moses commences to become cognizant of the invincibility of the pharaoh by comparing his own self with that of the pharaoh. God assures Moses of God's accompaniment to make Moses on a par with the pharaoh. Next, Moses intends to investigate his target audience vis-à-vis their cooperation in the liberation process. God reveals God's name to be communicated to the Israelites and modifies God's plan, so that Moses could elicit the support of the Israelites' elders while having an audience with the pharaoh. Then, Moses wishes to be convinced of his own ability; therefore, he makes personal excuses. When God does not entertain any of his excuses, but instead grants him a subordinate leader Aaron and compels Moses to embark, then Moses might have realized his own worth. Under the guise of stubbornness, Moses manifests himself as a leader exemplar. Before he lays his hand on the plough, he queries about all the dimensions of his mission so strategically that later he has neither to regret nor to retrospect. A leader today may learn from Moses the tricks of the trade, viz., name the task, familiarize with those who would be involved and affected, anticipate the pitfalls, gauge the cooperation level of the beneficiaries, be convinced of one's abilities, and trust in the notion that God assigns this mission.

Moses sets precedence of delegating authority with responsibility. In the wilderness, the Israelites are intimidated by both human and nonhuman forces. Some menaces endanger their existence as God's chosen race; others disorient them from their agenda to occupy the

Promised Land. As a paragon leader, Moses decentralizes the power structure. Such mutation in power equations provides every Israelite an easy access to authoritative figure, without spending much time and energy. Though Moses remains far from desiring to assert totalitarian claim to authority, intricate cases are presented to him; thus, Moses continues to serve as a rallying point for all his delegates. Against the most diffused policy of divide and rule, prevailing in the majority of the institutions of present time, Moses offers a healthier and better alternative: delegate and govern.

As a divinely appointed leader, Moses enumerates norms of the emanating flavour of religious leadership. Emulating God in governing the followers becomes a reality only if the leader stays consistently connected with God. Intimacy with God facilitates conversation with the divine to discern the will of God and to beg pardon of God in case of not allowing God's will to prevail. Analogous to the instrument of telephone, Moses coordinates the dialogue between God and God's chosen race. In the world of today, the followers are swarmed with multifarious voices. A religious leader, in the vein of Moses, has the responsibility towards the followers to aid them in prioritizing the life-augmenting voices.

God appoints Moses as the mediator to liberate the Israelites from the bondage in Egypt. Crossing the Reed Sea reveals God as the primary cause of liberation; Moses serves merely as an instrumental cause. Moses neither supplants nor substitutes God. In the name of God, at the behest of God and on behalf of God, Moses functions. Moses' role as the mediator enlightens the religious leadership of modern society. Science and technology, electronics and astrophysics, medicines and researches, personal skills and communal infrastructure, trap a religious leader to become autocratic, instead of remaining theocratic. The Israelites crossed the Reed Sea under the aegis of Moses; they were afraid to encounter God face to face; and they relied heavily on Moses. Moses could have exploited such a scenario for self glorification, eclipsing God totally. However, Moses remained always a go-between God and the Israelites and never became the destination for the Israelites. Moses embodies an axiom for a religious leader today: Become a way to God for the followers, but do not become God to them.

At the foot of Mount Sinai, at Taberah, at Hazeroth, at Kadesh, and by the way to the Reed Sea in the wilderness, the Israelites defy God and God's appointed mediator Moses on various counts. The narrator relates that God spews anger, but Moses remains unperturbed; God wants to annihilate or, at least, chastise the offenders, but Moses prefers to plead for them. It seems that the narrator intends to inculcate a lesson in presenting God and Moses in disparate hues vis-à-vis the Israelites' offence. A leader has to sympathize with the adherents. In the ambiance of accusation, criticism, backlash of the modern generation, a leader has to rise to the occasion, own up the transgressions of the followers, understand their predicaments, and solicit on their behalf. Moses prays and fasts to expiate the wrong doings of the Israelites. He confronts them with a view to staving such endangering manoeuvrings in future. Moses offers a paradigm to the modern leader to cope with crisis in the community and to 'carefront' the members, who engendered such crisis.

Moses does not lead the Israelites autocratically. He exhibits patience in listening to them. In his day-to-day dealings, Moses rehearses the proverbial wisdom, 'one does not have the whole truth always.' In present times, leaders seem to insist on their word as the last word, turning humane institutions into dictatorial regimes. In an autocratic way of governance, multiple points of view are sacrificed. Consequently, the decision taken may not enhance life; contrariwise, it may threaten life. Moses listens to the proposal of sending out spies. As a result, Joshua and Caleb receive the conviction that nomadic Israelites can subjugate the sedentary Canaanites. Later, Joshua does savour the conquest of the Promised Land and the Israelites do own that land. Moses listened to females, which forced him to consult God. God willed that an unprecedented phenomenon, namely, females inherit ancestral property, must be formalized in the male chauvinist Israelite society. A life enhancing revolution could take place because Moses listened to his followers. The will of God is discerned through the negotiations between the leader and the followers. The will of God does not reside entirely and always in the leader's dictates or in the followers' suggestions, but it rests in between, requiring a candid dialogue between the leader and the followers. An imitable lesson Moses leaves as a legacy for the modern day leader.

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Leadership in Wisdom Literature
"Where there is no guidance, a nation falls" (Pro. 11:14)
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The Wisdom Books of the Old Testament reflect the times in which Israelite society had been decentralized – owing to the loss of land and kingship, the basic centralizing factors prior to the great Exile. The sages within the community who gave guidance since then have idealized leadership, making integrity of character and a spiritual outlook as the hallmarks of a true leader, besides practical and prudential wisdom.

Introduction

Great biblical traditions found in the Pentateuch, and the historical and prophetic literature have depicted a God who entered the lives of the people and interacted with them. We are so familiar with this concept of divine revelation in history, named 'salvation history', to the extent of ignoring other modes of divine-human dialogue. That such a dialogue and interaction with the divine is possible through ordinary human experience and through creation is amply demonstrated by the group of biblical books normally designated 'Wisdom Literature'. The sages of Israel too were religious persons who had an insight into the divine mystery in a manner distinct from that of the prophets – but nonetheless effective in guiding the minds of the political and religious leaders and of the people in general. Wisdom Literature is not to be considered the 'secular counter-part' of the otherwise 'spiritual and religious' books of the rest of the Old Testament in so far as wisdom experience could also be described as faith experience, because the shaping of Israel's views of the world and of divine activity in it was done in anambience of faith, and was characterized by trust and reliance upon God.[1]

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[1] Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*

The wise of Israel was 'religious' in every sense of the term. The oft repeated statement 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom' (Pro 1:7 et al) points to the religious nature of biblical wisdom. Who were these wise people and what role did they play in the Israelite society? In what sense could they be considered leaders?

1. The Wise, Wisdom and Wisdom Literature

The late origin of wisdom books proposed by current scholarship should not lead to the conclusion that the sages appeared from nowhere during the inter-testamental period and took over the mantle of leadership of Israelite life.[2] Wisdom and wisdom teachers were always part of Israelite life and society.[3] Though Jewish concept of the wise and wisdom may have been later influenced by interaction with Hellenistic culture and philosophy, the Jews had already developed their own conception of the sage. The Jewish sage was characterized by having + *hokmah* (wisdom) and was called a + *hakam* (wise). *Hokamah and Hakam* occur frequently in the Hb Bible, especially in the Wisdom Books, though these do not always denote wisdom or the wise. [4] The *hakamim* are at times considered 'experts' and so could be persons with skill required for weaving garments (Ex 35:26), metal working and carpentry skills (Ex 31:1-5), navigational skill (Ps 107:27). *Hokmah* denotes ability (Hos 13:13), shrewdness (Sam 13:3; Pro.30:24) and successful military and political leadership (Dt 34:9; Is 10:13). In all this what one sees is an obvious prudential, pragmatic and even utilitarian nuance the word has, and so G. Von Rad

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(Cambridge: 1990), 125. Also, Roland E.Murphy, "Wisdom Themes and Hypotheses", in J.G. Gammie (ed), *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in honour of Samuel Terrien* (New York: Scholars Press for Union Theological Seminary, 1978), 36.

[2] The label 'sage' in this article has been used in the traditional sense for putative wise persons, men and women, from the past. The designation denotes the intellectual class of the biblical times – teacher, scribe, counselor, elder- though each of this would have a different Hebrew word for it.

[3] On the description of a sage in ancient Israel: Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 5. Also, J.G. Gammie and Leo G. Purdue (eds), *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990); Leo G. Purdue (ed),. *Scribes, Sages, and Seers: The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

[4] Of the 318 occurrences of the of the word *hokmah* in the OT, 183 times it is found in the books of Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth. Its Greek rendering with *sophia* is found more than 100 times in Ben Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon.

defines wisdom as "practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world, based on experience",[5] and in the words of N.K. Gottwald, it is "a brand of ancient 'how to win friends and influence people".[6] Such 'experiential wisdom' is the conformity to the underlying 'world-order' and leads to successful activity appropriate to social and personal order in everyday life. Referring to the Wisdom books contained in the 'Writings' Josephus, the Jewish historian, remarks that these "contain precepts for the conduct of human life" (*Against Apion* I,8).[7]

Qoheleth, the teacher, is called a *hakam* meaning 'wise' in Eccl 12:9 as he "taught people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs". Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, the friends of Job, are presented as advocates of conventional wisdom (Job 12:2) and by their own admission Job himself had 'instructed many, strengthened the weak hands and had supported those who were stumbling, and made firm the feeble knees' (Job 4:3-4), though none of them is named a *hakam*. In Sir 38: 34-39:11 the author praises the profession of a scribe (*soper*), and mentions that "nations will speak of his wisdom"(39:10). Reference to 'the wise' is found also in the Book of Proverbs (Pro 1:6; 24:23). From this Book we can put together a profile of a sage as one with diligence (14:4; 10:4), integrity (25:28; 25:14), prudence (27:12; 12:16), humility (13:10; 10:8), self-mastery (15:18; 29:11), fidelity in relationships (family) (19:26; 28:24) and concern for the poor (14:31; 17:5).

Understanding Israelite wisdom as purely experiential and practical almost to the extent of being utilitarian would amount to overlooking its other important aspect – its religious character. The *hokmah* received by the + *hakam* was divine and could not be attained apart from God. The *hakam* was righteous, divinely inspired and a teacher of *hokmah*. Wisdom shows one the way to become righteous before God. Wisdom is with God and comes from God (Sir 1:1); it remains inaccessible to us, its way is known to God alone (Job 28:23). At some point wisdom and covenantal laws are identified (Sir 24: 23). Moreover, OT wisdom

[5] G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology,* Vol 1 (London: SCM Press, 1965),41 8

[6] N.K.Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York; Harper &Row, 1959), 464.

[7] Josephus' book is a polemical work in defense of Judaism as a classical religion and philosophy. In speaking of the traditional 22 books of the Jewish Canon Josephus refers of the 'Writings'.

tradition personifies wisdom as a companion of God at the time of creation (Pro 8:22-31). This personification of wisdom, especially with its relation to the Creator, is developed further in the books of the Wisdom of Solomon (ch. 9) and the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach (ch.24). Once wisdom has been placed in the divine domain it is easier to understand why the Psalmist considers a wise person a religious person when he says "Fools say in their hearts, 'there is no God'" (Ps 14:1).

Thus we have two shades of *hokmah*: practical (experiential) and religious (associated with God). If we say that sages were only concerned with the natural and social order and the laws governing them, our understanding of them would be simplistic and one-sided. In the ultimate analysis, while 'experiential' and 'religious' wisdom can be distinguished, they cannot be separated as two independent areas. According to Von Rad, "experiences of the world for Israel were always divine experiences as well, and the experiences of God were for her experiences of the world"[8]. Every act bore religious consequence. Life is lived in God's presence, as every law came from Sinai. Thus biblical wisdom is both practical and religious; stemming from the 'fear of the Lord' it branches out to touch all aspects of life.

In the Bible 'wisdom literature' is a category of books identified primarily due to the frequency of the words meaning *hokmah* and *hakam* in certain books, and some literary genres which are unique to them. In general these books provide us with a method of enquiry than a body of doctrine. However, J. L. Crenshaw has noted that Wisdom literature involves a marriage between form and content. [9] It contains intuitions about the meaning and mysteries of life, presented mostly in *mashal* forms – by means of proverbs, similes and other related figures of speech.

2. The Wise of Israel and A.N.E

The fact that OT wisdom tradition lacks emphasis on the themes like promise, election, deliverance and covenant which are exclusive to Israelite faith, can only be understood when it is seen in relation to the wide-spread tradition found among Israel's neighbours. Wisdom is a world-wide phenomenon and its literature focuses on the common themes of

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[8] G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 62.

[9] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 19.

creation, humanism and universalism. The enigmatic nature of human existence with its bewildering contrasts of riches and poverty, life and death, success and failure, well-being and suffering, love, sex, ageing and above all, the uncertainty of life hereafter are universal questions, regardless of culture, religion, time and place. Wisdom unites humankind. Wars have been fought on grounds of religious beliefs, but never on wisdom. The Israelite religion too employs a wisdom tradition that avoids a nationalistic and exclusivist view and therefore it could be said that wisdom literature is a privileged locus of cultural encounter.[10] OT Wisdom is part of a wider search - a search for meaning in life.

Mention may be made here of the dual roots of wisdom tradition in Israel: tribal or family wisdom and scribal or court wisdom. Family instruction and court counsel are the two main functions of wisdom evident in the Old Testament times.

3. Tribal Elders

Studies have been made on the social context of the wisdom material found in the Bible, especially inquiring into the source of this body of instructions. The areas in which Israel could have formulated its own wisdom material, drawn also from accumulated and age-old wisdom of its A.N.E neighbours,   are the families and clans.[11] It has been suggested that in the pre-literary stage of ancient Israel the wise sayings related to daily life may have been formed, creating an ethos which guided people in the villages and towns by commands, prohibitions and observations. The home may have been the site of such teaching and parents were the teachers. Very often such instructions are given by the use of comparisons drawn from nature, based on the firm conviction that there is a close relation between the natural order and the moral order (cf. Pro 6:6-9; 20:4). But to date scholars have not been able to identify a school or group of leaders or elders who were responsible for the formulation of such wisdom material aimed at educating the people.

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[10] L. Legrand, *The Bible on Culture* (Bangalore: TPI, 2008), 41.

[11] Richard J. Clifford, "Introduction to Wisdom Literature" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol V (Nashville: Abington Press, 1997) 7. Also, Roland E. Murphy, "Introduction to Wisdom Literature", in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 448.

4. Scribal Counsellors

After having remarked that we have only scanty information about the sages provided by the wisdom books, Murphy opines that they are mostly associated with royalty and teaching.[12] Jeremiah (8,8) identifies two classes of professionals in his society - the wise (*hakamim*) and the scribes (*soperim*). The intricate writing systems in the A.N.E., especially in Egypt, would obviously point to the existence of such professionals in the literary field. That the wise dispensed 'counsel' is shown in Jer 18,18 and indications are that such men were at the service of the king to give counsel or advise, as the case in 2 Sam 16:20-23 where Ahitophel, David's counsellor, gave advice to Absalom (which he rejected) and in 1 Kg 12:6 where Rehoboam took counsel with advisers. Scholars have looked to Egypt for the source of the scribal system which had trained court officials for keeping records, maintaining archives and for diplomatic correspondence with foreign rulers. When was the scribal wisdom tradition introduced into Israel and the O.T.? Two of Israel's kings are credited with important contributions to scribal wisdom: Solomon (1 Kgs.4:29-34) and Hezekhiah, about 700 B.C. (Pro.25:1). Thus the scribal institution may have made inroads into Israel in the beginning of monarchic times, though there are no direct references to formal 'schools' at the time. By then Egypt had it in an advanced form. It is likely that Solomon had followed the Egyptian scribal system in his newly established kingdom in order to help him in its administration. It is also likely that these scribes are the ones who began collecting proverbs. Once the existence of the scribes or 'class of the wise' sponsored by the royal courts is supposed in Israel it might be possible to assume, according to Murphy, that these refined and formalized the clan and tribal wisdom.[13] Later we hear of the 'house of instruction' (Sir 51:23) where teachings were given, modelled on the Near Eastern, primarily Egyptian, system.[14]

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[12] Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, 3.

[13] Roland E. Murphy, "Introduction to Wisdom Literature", in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary,* 448. Also, W. H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction* (Bombay: St.Paul Publication, 1992), 373. However, R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old testament* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 24-31, contests the idea of the existence of a professional class of sages in Israel.

[14] J.J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Westminster: John Knox Press,

5. The De-centralizing Role of Wisdom

Wisdom occupied centre stage in the post-exilic times as the once centralizing factors like land and monarchy had lost their importance and prophets' voices became more and more distant. Early traditions (legal and prophetic) addressed community concerns – group identity, origins, etc. Wisdom tradition is more concerned with family matters and individual interests. It provided 'survival strategies' in the post-exilic scenario. Along with the Law and the temple, wisdom now was the guiding principle, permeating every aspect of Israelite life and, at the same time, influencing the various literary traditions which would eventually find their way into what we now know as the books of the Old Testament. A temple built on the occupied land was not likely to last and so even while it was still standing Wisdom alongside *Torah* began to shape the life of the Jewish people regardless of the place where they lived. The wise men's influence increased after the Exile, when they were identified with the 'scribes' and their instructions were combined with the study of the Law.[15] With the identification of *Hokmah* and *Torah* by Ben Sirach of Jerusalem around 180 B.C., leadership in Judaism was being handed over to the class called the teachers or sages.

6. Wise Women

It may be relevant at this point to draw our attention to the role of women as leaders in the context of the decentralizing function of wisdom. Speaking of wise women's role in the early days of Israel, Claudia V. Camp says that a decentralized leadership during pre and early monarchic periods demanded the contribution of women to the survival of the community.[16]

If this was true of those times, it was true also of the times after the collapse of that institution, when family and tribal settings once again gained importance. To be sure, women by their nature had advantages

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1997), 29. Also, R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 129.

[15] De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 50.

[16] Claudia V. Camp, "The Female Sage in Ancient Israel and in the Biblical Wisdom Literature," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Eisenbrauns, 1990), 188.

n certain leadership capacities in a tribal setting. While it is probable that there were groups of Jewish leaders, including sages or intellectuals, contenting for power and position in the community, the great majority of Jews living in post-exilic Judah carried on their lives largely within the social context of extended families that comprised village clans of family life.[17]

We read in the Historical Books about Judge Deborah (Jud 4-5), King Athaliah (2 Kgs 11) and prophetesses Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14) and Noadiah (Neh 6:14). There are also references to a few 'wise women', like the one of Tekoa (2 Sam 14) who interceded for Absalom with his father David, and woman of Abel (2 Sam 20) who interceded for her village with Joab during Sheba's rebellion. There is one reference to a "wise woman" in Proverbs 14:1, and the "capable woman" described in Pro 31:10-31 embodies one particular vision of what a "wise woman" should be like. In the post-exilic Israel it was the rural areas that continued the ancient tribal customs. And therefore it was there that the wise women were to exercise their leadership, however limited that was, away from the cities and centres of power.

7. Priests, Prophets and the Wise

Jer 18:18 reads:

> Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah for instruction shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us bring charges against him, and let us not heed any of his words".

It is clear from this that by the time of Jeremiah the wise assumed sufficient prominence and were of major influence to be considered equally important as the other two groups of leaders in Judah – the prophets and the priests. The passage also indicates that these were the sources of divine direction, and it would continue despite Jeremiah's predictions to the contrary (Jer 6:13-15).[18] The three stand for authority

[17] Leo G. Perdue, "Wisdom Theology and Social History in Proverbs 1-9", in *Wisdom, You are my Sister*, Studies in honour of Roland E.Murphy, O.Carm., on the occasion of his 80th Birthday, C.B.Q. Monograph Series 29, (Ed) M.L. Barre (Washington D.C. 1997), 81-82.

[18] J.A.Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah: The New International commentary on the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), 441. S.Weeks , *Early Israelite Wisdom*

figures in the community and the sources of their authority (Ezek 7,26).[19] About two centuries after Jeremiah's time, the same group would be directly responsible for the compilation of what we now call the Old Testament, the *torah*, *nebim* and *ketubim*, respectively corresponding to Priests, Prophets and the Wise.[20] The three groups represent three ways of mediating the divine-human realms: the priests by the explanation of the divine law, the prophets by uttering oracles containing divine word and divine will, and the wise dispensing advices and counsels for right conduct in daily life. Compared to the first two groups, the sages do not seem to be an organized class and their teaching too down-to earth to be well structured. These were lay leaders whose insight and perspective were valued resources for people in need of guidance and direction. They dealt more with the matters of everyday life and how to survive and be successful in the business of living. From the 5th century when monarchy was dissolved, and during the Persian and Greek periods when the phenomenon of prophecy faded, the wise men gained more important status (e.g., Sirach and Wisdom).

8. The Wise of Israel and Leadership

We have seen earlier who the wise were and what qualities they possessed. But what role did they play in the Israelite society? Were they mere dispensers of wise sayings and riddles (Pro 1:5-6; Eccl 9: 17; Sir 38:24) or teachers (Pro 13:14), scribes and scholars (1 Chro 27:32; Ezra 7:11)? The sages belonged to the intellectual tradition of Israel, and as such they exerted certain influence over the populace in general and over the actual leaders of the time. Theirs was mostly 'intellectual leadership', which was not easily separable from the religious and ethical sphere in ancient Israel. [21] At the same time they were active in the struggle for power and influence in the shaping of Judaism of the Second Temple period.[22] We will now have to see what they expected

(Oxford University Press, 1990), 89-90, is also of opinion that what united the three groups in Jeremiah 18,18 is their role as sources of divine guidance and not as representatives of any establishment.

[19] P.D.Miller, *The Book of Jeremiah*, in The New Interpreter's Bible Vol. VI (Nashville: Abington Press, 2001), 716.

[20] J. Blenkinsopp: *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Traditions in Israel* (N.Y, 1995), 9.

[21] Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 1.

[22] Perdue, "Wisdom, You are my Sister", 87.

of a leader in their society, and while they have certain clear notions as to who the ideal leader could be, we must admit that they did actually possess in some measure the traits they esteemed.

9. Solomon, the Ideal Sage-Leader

It appears that the sages of Israel consider Solomon as their role model, a sage and leader par excellence, as is evident from the authorship that has been ascribed to him for the wisdom books (except Job and Sirach).[23] No doubt the historical books provide instances enhancing the point that Solomon proved his calibre as a wise man, apart from crediting him with literary activities, the results of which have not always found their way into the scriptures. It is probable that the mention of 3000 'proverbs' and a thousand and five 'songs' composed by Solomon (1 Kgs 4:32) provided the opportunity for later sages to ascribe the writing of a variety of compositions of their own to him, including Pss 72 and 127, even centuries after his death. He attained wisdom in a dream at Gibeon where he asked God only for discernment - an understanding mind with the ability to distinguish between good and bad (I Kgs 3:4-14). Later he acquired the ability also to judge difficult situations, such as the dispute between the two prostitutes over the newborn baby. Rather than consulting the legal codes for a precedent case in question, he bases his judgment on the perception of human nature (1 Kgs 3:16-27). His wisdom was also exemplified in the construction of the temple and the visits of foreign kings and nobles, who came to see his great understanding and wealth (1 Kgs 4:29–34). By the time of the writing of the wisdom books, the tradition about Solomon as the embodiment of wisdom was well established.

As a result, a standard characterization of a + *hakam* is said to be developed by Solomon himself. He excelled in wisdom (2 Chr 9:22– 23), was endowed with righteousness (Ps 72:1), had the fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7), taught wisdom and discernment (Prov 1:5), did not live a life of duplicity

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[23] This might sound problematic for us with our present idea of authorial integrity, but practice of pseudonymous attribution was common and even praiseworthy in the ancient world. By writing under the pseudonym of King Solomon, the author was able to secure the book its authoritative status through its ascription to an esteemed figure of the past. More on the question of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha, see J. H. Charlesworth, (ed)., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, (*New York: Doubleday, 1985).

(Prov 2:12; 6:14), kept good company (Prov 13:20); set his mind to learning (Eccl 8:16); and revered God and followed his commandments (Eccl 12:12–14). These are the qualities which a sage-leader should possess, as it had been in the case of Solomon the ideal sage.

Mention may be made here that the establishment of monarchy in Israel under David and Solomon necessitated good advice in the palace. A good and wealthy king had to be wise, of mature judgement and committed to learning. Thus the reports about Solomon's wisdom, in the instances enumerated above, may not be exactly historical. As a matter of fact Solomon's reign was one of oppression, including forced labour (1 Kgs 4:6; 12:4. 11). The Northern tribes had revolted leading to the schism in 922 B.C., immediately following the death of Solomon (1 Kgs 12:1-15).[24]

Solomon's prayer for wisdom in Wisdom 9 is relevant for us in the sense that it is here that he expresses his desire for God's wisdom to be with him to assist him in his three-fold kingly duties – as ruler, judge and builder of the temple (9: 7-12). This could be the starting-point for the discussion on his leadership ability, actually constructed by the biblical sages, and by extension considered indispensable also for any leader.

10. A Just Leader

Proverbs about the king give us a clue to wisdom in leadership. What kind of person is the king? "His steadfast loyalty safeguards the king, and he upholds his throne by justice" (Prov 20:28). What should the king do or not do? "If a king is zealous for the rights of the poor, his throne stands firm forever" (Prov 29:14). Who should be the king's advisers? "The king takes delight in honest lips, and he loves those who speak what is right" (Prov 16:13). Apparently the wise and the leaders of Israel came from the populace with wealth. This is evident from the admiration they show for the power of wealth (Eccl 10:19; Pro 10:15; Sir 10:13-14), their counsel to the rich to enjoy their wealth (Eccl 5:18-19; Sir 14:11-16) and their belief, based on the traditional theory of retribution, that they are wealthy because they are wise and diligent

[24] R. Mayer & I. Rüle, "Salomo als Prototyp eines Weisen? Die Weisheit Salomos einmal anders", *Bibel und Kirche* 52 (1997) 193-199. These authors point to the dark sides of Solomon who is traditionally known as the ideal wise man. The obvious reasons are the ruthlessness with which he established his rule by killing his opponents, his marriage of the non-Israelite women and worshipping their gods.

(Pro 3:16; 21:20). On the other hand, we come across numerous instances in which the sages express dissatisfaction with riches and point out problems of having it (Sir 27:1-3; Eccl 5:6-16), and would prefer wisdom, good name and health to it (Pro 3:13-15; Sir 30:14-16). Thus, as with those who are disillusioned by wealth, the sages recommend the traditional concept of charity and alms-giving to help the poor and the needy (Pro 4:1-5; 22:9; Sir 12:3).

However, there is also another unmistakable trend in the Wisdom Literature - the sages recommend social justice and believed that they had a social responsibility.[25] In many instances the wise describe the problem of injustice: the use of false weights (Pro 2:1; 16:11), moving land marks (Pro 23:10; Job 24:2), not giving justice to the poor in the court because they lack clout and resources (Pro 22:22), partiality in justice (Sir 7:6), bribery (Pro 15:27) and false witnessing (Pro 19:5; 21:8). There are also references to the fact that the poor are so because of the rich – like in the instances where homes of the poor were seized by the greedy rich (Job 20:19; 22:8-9). Ben Sirach, in instructing the would-be leaders among upper middle class youth of Palestine in the Hellenistic times, makes mention of inequality that existed between the rich and poor (Sir 13:4. 18-19). In chs 13 and 31 he has lengthy reflections on the topic and advises of caution against indiscreet indulgence in the pleasures attached to riches.

We might say that these are mere observations that the sages make, like Qoheleth who notices the injustice and corruption in society but apparently throws up his hands in despair, unable to do anything about it (Eccl 5:7). In reality that is not the case. In most of the wisdom books the sages call to respond to the problem of injustice. The very purpose of the Book of Proverbs, as stated in the introduction, is to 'gain instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity' (1:3). The sage-leader had to advocate just judgment for the poor (Pro 29:7). The friends of Job concede that he had been a leader of well-repute in the community as he had 'instructed many, strengthened the weak hands, supported those who were stumbling, and made firm the feeble knees' (Job 4:3-4). In 29:11-17 Job declares himself to be a blameless person,

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[25] L.G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2007), 61.

having justice as his robe' (v.14) and in 31: 16-22 in his self-defence he denies any misconduct related to justice and care of the poor.

Solomon prayed that, with the assistance of God's wisdom, 'he may be found worthy of the throne of this father' (Wis 9:12). His father David's rule has been characterized by the biblical historians as one with 'justice and equity to all his people' (2 Sam 8:15; 1 Chr 18:14), which in fact is the nature of God's own rule (Pss 9:8; 98:9). There are indications from the Ancient Near East that it was primarily God who protected the weak, and the king represented Him in this function.[26] The ruler was also expected to focus on justice to the oppressed and the unprotected.[27] This was true also in the case of Israel. Concern for the rights and well-being of all people, especially the poor, seem to be the hallmark of any ruler or leader of the people, as David's own prayer in Ps 71:1 shows. Thus as leaders of the people the sages too, like the prophets, had the responsibility to advocate justice in the land.

11. A Wise Judge

"Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Pro 31:8-9), counsels the sage. Evidently, judging entails defending the cause of the poor and the dispossessed. There are loud acclamations in the Psalms that the real judge is God himself (Pss 7:9; 96:10; cf. 1Sam 24:16) and that it is God who gives this power to the king or leader (Ps 72:1). An important role of the *hakam* was to give counsel or guidance, as is seen in Jer 18:18. Good leaders seek wise counsel to advise them in all matters of the organization, because "without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed" (Pro 15:22; 24:6) and "where there is no guidance, a nation falls" (Pro 11: 14). Being a leader does not mean having answers to all the problems, and hence the necessity of seeking guidance from those with experience. King Rehoboam had disregarded the counsel of the 'elders' at Shechem, and the result was the secession and the loss of half of his kingdom.

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[26] F. Fensham, "Widow, Orphan and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21 (1962) 137-139.

[27] B.V. Malchow, "Social Justice in the Wisdom Literature", *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 12 (1992), 120. Also, E. Beaucamp, *Man's destiny in the Books of Wisdom* (New York: Alba House, 1970), 3.

"Stand in the company of the elders. Who is wise? Attach yourself to such a one", was the advice of Sirach to the future leaders (elders and wise are synonyms in Sir 6:34). A leader had to be 'wise' and in the company of the wise.

Moreover, sound leadership has a strong moral foundation (Pro 16:12). It involves building safeguards and accountability systems in crucial areas so as to protect and keep those in authority above reproach. Integrity and honesty can be classed as the foundation of effective leadership. Not only are good leaders honest, but they want honest people around them (Pro 16:13). The unfortunate tendency of "bureaucratic protection' by means of which wrong doers are protected by the system was noticed by Qoheleth, as seen in the second part of Eccl 5:8.[28] The numerous qualities demanded of a leader in the Book of Proverbs have the bottom-line in one basic factor – *integrity of character*, essential for effective leaders.[29]

12. Spiritual Bridge-Builder

The rulers of Israel were closely associated with the temple and cult. David had decided to construct a temple for Yahweh (2 sam 7:2-3) and later set up an altar (2 Sam 24:25); Solomon built and dedicated it (1 Kgs 5-8); Jeroboam founded a sanctuary in Bethel (1 Kgs 12: 26-33); King Josiah initiated a reform in worship (2 Kgs 23). The king was a sacral person and was responsible for the covenantal life of the people; his own oath before the Lord to keep the commandments and decrees of the Lord, (2 Chr 34:31) echoes the covenantal obligation of the people in Dt 30:16. The point is this: no leader in Israel was purely a secular, political figure.

In a lengthy section titled 'Hymn in honour of our Ancestors' (44-50) Ben Sirach tried to integrate Israel's sacred as well as sapiential

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[28] "The high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them" (Eccl 5,8b) could be understood in that sense if 'watching' (*shamar*) is understood as 'protecting' (Pro 13,3; Ps 97,10). However, for W.S. Tower, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, in The New Interpreter's Bible Vol. V (Nashville: Abington Press, 2001), 318, the statement has reference to corrupt practices in the society. So "every official 'watches' those lower on the chain of authority in order to secure a percentage of the tax or bribe revenue".

[29] Beaucamp, *Man's Destiny*, 6.

traditions, thus juxtaposing prudential leadership and its divine origin. The book of Proverbs compares good leadership to the flowing water directed and controlled by God. "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will" (Pro 21:1). The key to wise leadership is compliance with divine direction, for leadership under God's control will accomplish God's work. The kings of Israel are an instructive example of this principle. Those leaders who fulfilled the covenantal obligation and submitted themselves to divine direction experienced success while those who went their own way met with disaster. Good leaders must also be good followers – of God who commissioned them.

'Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom' is a statement which is found, with some minor variations, twelve times in the Wisdom books (Pro 1:7; 9:10; 15:33, 111:10; Job 28:28; Sir 1:14-27; 19:20; 21:11). That this is true of no other statement in this literature indicates the import it has. The expression would amount to the religiosity a person has and the relatedness a person experiences to the supernatural. No leader, therefore, could be considered good and wise devoid of a spiritual outlook. A leader's authority is on firmer grounds when it comes from the authenticity and integrity of life, and not necessarily from pedigree. That the leaders in the earlier sections of the Bible were persons related to God and in consequence enabled to guide and direct the community is true to a great extent also in its wisdom literature.

Conclusion

In comparison with the other major sections of the Old Testament, wisdom literature has scanty reference to the theme of leadership within the community, the only exception being Ben Search's 'hymn in honour of our Ancestors' (chs. 44-50). Political and military leadership do not really come within the purview of these books. The sages fit into the intellectual and spiritual tradition that came to the forefront following the catastrophe of 587 B.C. While the 'wise women' exerted influence in the tribal and family environment, traditional sages rendered their services as counsellors and advisers to the young and would-be leaders of the

community. In their capacity as leaders they gave practical guidance in the form of axioms; it is in these that we come across the qualities required of good leadership.

Wisdom tradition in Israel has all the elements found in the non-Israelite culture. In that sense the hopes placed on leadership along with its qualities are akin to those prevalent in their neighbouring societies. Thus a strong practical bend prevails in the treatment of the theme of leadership, and this is true of other wisdom themes like mysteries of life and retribution. However, Israel domesticated the wisdom material of the A.N.E. by emphasizing the role of the divine will in matters which would otherwise be considered purely secular. So leaders had to be 'wise' in the sense of having the 'fear of God' as their mantle, thus narrowing traditional gap that exists between the secular and the sacred. The adulation of Solomon by the compilers of these books serves as the prism through which ideal leadership is seen.

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Biblical Prophets as Transformative Leaders

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In this article the author tries to understand the biblical prophets as transformative leaders. Their leadership role is oriented towards the transformation of the individual and society. They derive their authority from their divine call and they evaluated their contemporary society on the basis of divine parameters. An important aspect of their leadership is their unflinching demand for social justice. They spared no word to point out the deviations, which compromised the covenant consciousness. They dared to be different from the common currents and trends of their time. The understanding of prophets as transformative leaders provides a model for the Church and its leaders to become agents of transformation.

Introduction

Leadership is a functional term. It can generally be understood to have two orientations: first, result-oriented, second, change-oriented. When we consider the leadership qualities of biblical prophets, we need to think in terms of change-oriented or transformative leadership.

Biblical prophets have usually been understood as "charismatic leaders" over against "institutional leaders" of Israelite society.[1] As leaders of the covenant community they were transformative agents who tried to evaluate their contemporary society by pre-set divine parameters and

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[1] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament, vol.1* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 289-391.

values of societal and interpersonal relationships. They were called to be lighted lamps on a lamp stand so that all those who were in the darkness of denial of life might be illumined. Prophets are called not to conform themselves to the dominant world view and standards of the time, rather they are to become points of reference of God's ways and designs. So we can say that biblical prophets were divinely authorised leaders of the covenantal community to become heralds and guarantors of the divine purpose in transforming society from its value-erosion and deterioration and to orientate it to correct societal living.

1. Biblical Prophet: Divinely Authorised Leader

An important trait of a biblical prophet is that he/she is not a self-appointed or humanly made leader; rather it is the result of a divine call and commissioning. In other words, prophetic leadership is the result of a divinely authenticated and legitimised appointment. This is quite evident from the accounts of various prophetic call narratives (e.g., Isa 6:1-13; Jer 1:4-10; Amos 3:8; 7:14-15 etc). Prophetic leadership derives its origin and authority from the divine word uttered to the prophet and by the power of His spirit. As Micah emphatically states: "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8).[2] Amos clarifies that the reason for his being a prophet to address the people of Northern Israel at the royal sanctuary of Bethel is the compelling power of the word of God.[3] It was the empowering and purifying touch of the divine that enabled them to take up the role of a prophet, to be a spokesperson of God and a mediator between Yahweh and His people. The healing power of the burning coal from the altar of God fortified Isaiah, with all his disability and unworthiness, to feel adequate to declare his readiness for mission: "Here I am, send me" (Isa 6:8)[4]. Similarly, the touch of the divine hand strengthened Jeremiah's power of speech (Jer 1:9).

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[2] Ann Johnston, "Prophetic Leadership in Israel", *Bible Today 34* (1996): 83-88.

[3] See, Joy P. Kakkanattu, "'The Lion Roars; Who Cannot But Listen', The Dynamics of the Word of God in the Life and Ministry of Amos", in *Dynamism of the Word of God and Biblical Personalities* (ed. S. Mullooparambil; Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2009), 93-111.

[4] Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 58.

Humanly speaking, many of the prophets were neither professionally equipped nor did they have the feeling of adequacy to respond positively to the call to be Yahweh's spokesperson. They responded creatively to the divine initiative solely by relying on the power of the One who called. When Amos says that "I am not a prophet, nor a prophet's son, but Yahweh took from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'", he refers to the divine initiative which made him a prophet despite his professional insufficiency. The self-awareness of one's own inadequacy to be God's prophet is reflected in the words of objection to the divine invitation in the call narratives: Moses objects, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exod 4:10); Isaiah said in awe, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ..." (Isa 6:5). As Dennis Bratcher rightly observes:

> The use of this fuller form in the commissioning narrative would serve two purposes. First, it serves to highlight the conviction that leaders would not be able to succeed because of their own skill or knowledge. They are not being commissioned because they have the ability to succeed, but because they are willing to acknowledge their *inability*. As a theological commentary on leadership, this affirms that true leaders are not those who think they have the skill to lead or who seek leadership. Rather, they are those who are reluctant because they understand how inadequate they are for the task, yet are willing to depend upon God for guidance and empowerment. This concept of the reluctant and inadequate leader who can be used by God to do great things is reinforced by other rhetorical techniques in Scripture, such as the choosing of the younger son (David, Joseph) or a childless couple (Abraham, Hannah, Manoah, Elizabeth).[5]

2. Prophet: Leader with a Mission

Another aspect of divine commission is that every prophetic call is for a mission. Any leadership for success should be result-oriented.

[5] http://www.crivoice.org/prophetcall.html

In the case of prophetic leadership, it is also result-oriented. However, the nature of the result is not profit; instead, it is a change of heart. Due to the peculiarity of transformative leadership, the mission entrusted to the prophets was to challenge their audiences to wake up from their lethargic attitude and to reawaken in them their covenant consciousness. Their mission as speakers in the name of God was not merely to save their country, but was primarily, as A.J. Heschel puts it, "to re-establish the relationship between Israel and God", which was ruptured due to Israel's failure to reciprocate God's attachment to them.[6]

In short, the gist of prophetic mission is the transformation of persons and community. Nathan was sent to David to make him aware of his transgressions, which induced in him remorse and the regeneration of rectitude. Elijah's mission was to teach the king and the people of his time the truth of Yahweh, the God of Israel. While pre-exilic prophets like Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah and 1st Isaiah had the mission to point out the gross mistakes in the realm of social ethics, religious fidelity, and covenant commitment prevalent in the Israelite society, and to warn them of the impending divine judgement unless they changed their ways, the exilic prophets like 2nd Isaiah and Ezekiel were entrusted with the mission to instil in the exiles the hope of restoration and a new beginning.

3. Prophet: A Leader who Critically Analyses Society with a Benchmark

A good leader is one who accesses the followers and the enterprise entrusted to him/her with given criteria or benchmarks. An important feature of prophetic leadership is that it is both critical and creative in its evaluation of the society entrusted to it. As George Palackapilly says, "The function of the Old Testament prophets seems to have been to serve as conscience for the people in precisely those matters where conscience was needed. The prophets were repeatedly referring to the unjust structures in Israelite society that needed to be rectified".[7] When they critically looked at the Israelite community of their times through the prism of God's intentions, they could identify

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[6] Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets I* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2003), 203.

[7] George Palackapilly, "Economic Ethics: Biblical Resources", *Theology For Our Times* 6 (1999): 104.

elements that were not proper, and these were vehemently criticised by them as unacceptable. At the same time, they encouraged people to amend their errant ways and to return to Yahweh based on the assurance of God's forgiveness.

i. Exodus Experience: A Benchmark

The Exodus experience and its purpose often become for the prophets a benchmark for evaluating the Israelite society. The God of Israel, who liberated Israel, listened to their cry of oppression from a situation of slavery and brought them to the freedom of covenant relationship, expected them to practise justice, equality, etc. The Exodus, thus, is seen as the threshold of a process through which Israel would become the beloved covenant partner of God. As Brueggemann argues, if Egypt symbolizes a religion of static triumphalism and the politics of oppression and exploitation, Exodus symbolizes the alternative religion of the freedom of God, and the politics of justice and compassion.[8]

As a community wrought by the standards of the Exodus, the Israelite community was expected to live up to them. Any incongruity in living these standards was criticised by the prophets. Amos places the election of Israel *vis-a-vis* their responsibility (Amos 3:2). Hosea, by juxtaposing Yahweh's election of Israel with Israel's rejection of him on reaching the place of affluence called Canaan, depicts Israel's infidelity and ingratitude towards the fidelity of Yahweh (Hos 9:10;11:1ff.; 13:4-5).[9] For Hosea the infidelity of Israel to Yahweh evidenced in their worship of other gods, forgetting the benevolence of Yahweh, was a great sin.

ii. Covenant Relationship – A Criterion

As a community formed and guided by covenant relationship, Israel was expected to lead a life respecting the demands of the contracted covenant. Prophetic criticism of the life of the people was based on the requirements of the covenant. The covenant consciousness would necessarily bring in the character of the God of the Bible as a

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[8] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 14-27.

[9] Joy P. Kakkanattu, *God's enduring Love in the Book of Hosea,* (FAT II 13, Tûbingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 104-110.

'plumb line" to measure the behaviour of the Israelites as right or wrong. The quintessence of the covenant was that it was a personal love relationship. The covenant formula "I will be your God, you will be my people" demanded reciprocity. The biblical covenant was rooted in the gratuitous and benevolent decision of Yahweh to love Israel (Deut 7:6ff) and it must be understood, as Heschel holds, as participation, involvement and tension. To live according to the covenant was to partake of the fellowship of God and His people. In this reciprocal relationship, God was presented as a partner who ever struggles within himself to maintain the covenant, because if He were to execute his judgement upon Israel for its failure to keep the covenant, that would mean the rupture of the covenant.[10] As prophet Hosea clearly indicates, in God's struggle with his love for Israel manifested in the election and covenant and in Israel's betrayal of that love, His compassionate love has the final say.[11]

Another dimension of the prophetic approach to the covenant was their strong criticism of the failure of the community to live according to the demands of the covenant on the social, ethical and religious levels. A faithful commitment to God for the Israelites necessarily involved a just relation in society also. For the prophets it is impossible to please God merely through cultic religiosity. Only when cult is accompanied by the practice of justice, righteousness and compassion (*hesed*) (Amos 5:21-24; Hos 6:6; Micah 6:8) will it be pleasing to Him. Justice and righteousness are so important to God that without them Worship turns out to be a Godless phenomenon.[12] Proper relationship with God in genuine worship and in righteous interpersonal relationship is possible only through proper knowledge of God. When this is absent the result would be lawlessness in the community (Isa 1:3; Hos 4:1-4).[13] "In the absence of justice and righteousness, caprice and oppression, barbarianism and war rule".[14] As is evident from various prophetic texts (Isa 1:11-17; 58:1ff.; Amos 5:21-24 etc.), mere formalism of religion by

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[10] Heschel, *Prophets I*, 9-11.

[11] Kakkanattu, *God's enduring Love*, 193-194; Reinhard Feldmeyer-Hermann Spieckermann, *God of the Living. A Biblical Theology* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), 138-141.

[12] Feldmeyer- Spieckermann, *God of the Living*. 290.

[13] Kakkanattu, *God's enduring Love in the Book of Hosea*, 125-126.

[14] Feldmeyer- Spieckermann, *God of the Living*. 289-290.

focusing on the external rituals with self-serving orientation does not suffice to please the God of the Bible; it should be resonated in the ethical sphere by deeds of justice, righteousness, and loving kindness and compassion (Isa 58:3-9).[15]

Prophets, as leaders, prompt the audience and their followers towards a transformed society; a society which, realising its flaws, tries to amend and rectify them and to reconstruct a new one founded on correct principles. Hence, prophetic criticism of society is constructive criticism, which is a necessary component of any able leadership.

4. Prophet: Leader Who Stands for the Cause of the Less Privileged of Society

If we look for a common denominator to describe the charismatic leadership of the biblical prophets, it is their uncompromising siding with and for the less privileged and marginalised of society. Being aware of the nature of Yahweh (Exod 2:23), they hearkened to the distressed cry of the oppressed, down-trodden and exploited members of society. For the God whom they have encountered and represent is a God of justice who inclines his ears to listen to the cry of the poor and marginalised. He is a refuge for the poor and the needy in distress (Isa 25:4). In the words of Heschel, "Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and humans. God is raging in the prophet's words".[16]

Consequently, for the prophets, "righteousness is not just a value; it is God's part in life, *God's stake in human history*. Perhaps it is because the suffering of human person is a blot upon God's conscience; because it is in relations between human persons that God is at stake".[17] The compassionate and saving act of God, which had given Israel existence and dignity, served as a model for her to assist the poor and oppressed in her midst.[18] As a member of the covenant community,

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[15] Breward S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 478.

[16] Heschel, *Prohets* I, 5.

[17] Heschel, *Prohets I*, 198.

[18] Enrique Nardoni, *Rise Up O Judge. A Study of Social Justice in the Biblical World* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2004), 42.

every Israelite has to help his impoverished fellow Israelite (Exod 22:20-23). Any shortcoming in the just and righteous dealing with fellow beings becomes a matter of grave consideration, and the prophets address the proponent of the acts of injustice unswervingly – whether these are in the moral, economic, social, religious or political realms – in view of effecting a change. As leaders who looked at the social realities around them from the angle of the marginalised and pleaded for their cause, they attacked the unequal distribution of the fruits of economic growth in the Israelite society. They brought to light the corruption that prevailed in the upper layer of society, including kings, priests (Amos 7:14ff) and judges (Amos 5:12). The cosy attitude of the people towards religion having no bearing on life was rejected by the prophets as futile (Isa 1:10-15; Jer 6:20).

As transformative leaders and conscientizers, biblical prophets became the voice of the voiceless. They made the oppressors aware of their injustice towards the helpless and awakened in them a sense of covenantal duty of solidarity towards their victims.[19] In defence of the victims of injustice, they courageously confronted even the king and the administrative class for their abuse of power. These often considered themselves to be immune from criticism and set themselves above all laws. In fact, in Israel, the king "had to imitate God's behaviour toward his people by enlivening his action of justice with love, compassion and faithfulness".[20] For example, the prophet Nathan indicted King David of his heinous acts of injustice (2 Sam 12:1-15). Elijah raised his voice against the appalling crime of King Ahab (1 Kings 21). Prophets like Amos, Isaiah and Micah argued in favour of the poor and miserable in the Israelite society who became a prey to the unscrupulous and treacherous conduct of the profit-oriented powerful of the kingdom. These powerful groups distorted the laws for their own gains and bribed the judiciary to influence them (Amos 2:6-7; 8:4-6; Isa 1:21-23; Micah 3:1-3; 7:3).

What the prophets criticised was the rejection of the principle of solidarity and equitable sharing by the more prosperous of society

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[19] R Vande Walle, "The Minor Prophets as Conscientizers", *Jeevadhara* 19 (1989): 118.

[20] Nardoni, *Rise Up O Judge*, 98.

with the poor, and the greedy amassing of wealth and property for the benefit of a few at the cost of the defenceless marginalised.

5. Prophet: Leader who Shares the Same Fate and Participates with the Group He Represents

Successful leaders are those who never break their rootedness in and relatedness to their own people and culture. Even when they are graced with a divine consecration, they never forget their relationship to their family and community. They realise that they share the same destiny as their people. As Claus Westermann rightly says, "The prophets as mediators of the word of God are men of their time; while in the very midst of experiencing the present, they are under commission to accuse and to announce judgement upon it. They themselves are sitting in the boat whose capsizing they have to announce".[21] The reaction of Isaiah to the vision of the heavenly court is an expression of his sense of identity with his people (Isa 6:5). He "shares the self-same sickness as all his people, both lost and corrupt".[22] Together with the people, to whom he would be sent as God's spokesperson, he too was in need of purification for his sins. He needed to be healed by the divine healer in order to proclaim to his people their need of healing (Isa 1:10)[23]. Elijah declared drought in the land as a sign of divine punishment. However, together with the people, he too participated in the aftermath of the punishment. He suffered with the people.

Because of the prophets' sense of belonging to society, even while being aware of their privileged relationship with God, they intercede for the people with Yahweh. Intercession is an act of identifying and allying with the needy. For prophets, intercession often assumes the nature

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[19] R Vande Walle, "The Minor Prophets as Conscientizers", *Jeevadhara* 19 (1989): 118.

[20] Nardoni, *Rise Up O Judge*, 98.

[21] Claus Westermann, *What Does the Old Testament Say about God?* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 19879), 58.

[22] Childs, *Isaiah*, 56.

[23] Heschel, *Prophets I*, 85-90.

of mediation on behalf of the people to deter God from executing His judgement (Jer 37:3; 42:2-3; Amos 7:1-9).[24]

6. Leader who Corrects Deviations

Yet another important quality of a transformative leader is the ability and courage to point out deviations in order to invite the followers to conversion. This component is to a great extent present in the biblical prophets. In their role as God's spokespersons, they communicated the will of God to their contemporaries even though that often meant incurring their displeasure and rejection, because in the communication of the divine will, they spoke against the interest of the dominant culture and the viewpoint of the majority (Jer 7:1-7; 15:10-11; 26:1-15). However, they fought vigorously to expose the blatant aberrations prevalent in society. In the words of Brueggemann, "The prophet brings to public expression the dread of endings, the collapse of our self-madness, the barriers and pecking orders that secure us at each other's expense and the fearful practice of eating of the table of a hungry brother or sister"[25]. The prophets confronted the political leaders of society with their failure to care for the people entrusted to them and to guarantee a just and orderly society, which includes the protection of the rights of the poor and weaker sections of society (e.g., 2 Sam 11:1-14; 1 Kings 21:1-29; Isa 1:10-11, 23; 3:1-5; 30:1-5; Ezek 34:1-10) . They admonished the religious leaders for not imparting to the people the real knowledge of God (Hos 4:1-9). They accused the people of God for forgetting their God, who delivered them from slavery, provided nourishment in the desert and led them to a land of freedom (Jer 2:2-3; Hos 2:1-13; 9:10; 13:4-6). As Jeremiah succinctly puts it, "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13).

At the same time, the prophets exhorted the people to amend their ways by rectifying their sinful inclinations. They are encouraged to return to God, through genuine transformation by acknowledging their

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[24] Dariusz Iwanski, *The Dynamics of Job's Intercession (*Analecta Biblica 161; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituo Biblco, 2006), 341-348.

[25] Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination,* 50.

sins and dealing justly with their fellow human beings, and by being open to the gratuitous healing and pardon God extends to them (Jer 3:22; Hos 14:2-5).

7. Prophetic Leadership:
Vision for a Renewed Alternative System

Only a visionary leader will succeed in convincing his followers of the need to transform a flawed system into one based on more just principles. Biblical prophets were understood by later generations as authoritative and imaginative visionaries, who wanted to awaken the people of their time to the values and principles of a covenant community. As Brueggemann holds, "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us".[26]

The prophetic ministry is, on the one hand, to bring to light false ideas and corrupt institutions, and on the other hand, to promote the building of a new structure based on correct and renewed foundations (Jer 1:10). To the uncritical multitude who accepted the prevailing structures and practices of the time, the prophets posed critical and uncomfortable questions to draw them out of their inertia (e.g., Amos 3:2-8). They envisioned a total transformation of the hardened mentality of the people through a radical renewal of heart (Ezek 11:19-20). In sum, "the mission of a prophet is to open the people's hearts, to enhance their understanding, and to bring about rather than to prevent their turning to God".[27]

Their hope of the possibility of a new beginning, despite the inevitable punishment for the disloyalty of the people, is rooted in their understanding of God as the Holy One, who is a never-failing and enduring presence for the people in God's magnanimous and compassionate love. He refrains from His just anger at Israel's lack of responsiveness to His loving initiatives in order to maintain His relationship with an unfaithful covenant partner (Hos 11: 8-9).[28] Because of His enduring and steadfast

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[26] Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 13.

[27] Heschel, *The Prophets I*, 90.

[28] Kakkanattu, *God's Enduring Love*, 193.

love, there is hope of a new beginning, a new covenant to replace the ruptured old one (Jer 31:31-34).

As a result of this vision of God as the Just One, the prophets invited the people to return to Him, who will deal with them mercifully. It is this God-awareness that is reflected in the divine utterance, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even if these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isa 49:15). The knowledge that the God of the Bible is a God who brings about steadfast love (*hesed*), justice (*mishpat*) and righteousness (*zedakah*) on the earth, and One who delights in these things (Jer 9:23-24), urged the prophets to demand goodness from every human being. This translates into practising kindness (*hesed*) and justice (*mishpat*), and in walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

As a consequence of their vision of God as a God of justice, who is keenly concerned about the poor and needy of the community due to the denial of justice to them, comes forth the prophetic vision of a renewed society where the cry of the poor and needy will be heeded and justice will be the rule of governance (Isa 11:1-5). Through the image of a servant (*ebed*) of Yahweh, it is seen that care for the downtrodden and broken members of society is an important feature of the ministry of a spirit-filled leader (Isa 42:1-4). He, as a charismatic leader, counters the principle of the survival of the fittest through restoring the damaged and broken. The broken reed and smouldering wick are images for everything that is wretched, impotent and worthless. The broken reed and dimly burning wick are no longer useful for society. To extinguish a poorly burning light or to do away with a damaged reed does not require any special skill. But to restore what is fallen and to rekindle what is languishing needs resolve to go against the current. This is the noble task of the servant (*ebed*).

Conclusion

From our foregoing discussion, we can conclude that the biblical prophets were leaders who attempted to transform their contemporary society based on their vision of God. In the light of their God-experience, they analyzed society from God's intentions for it. The prophets exposed the contradictions between what is and what ought to be. While rejecting

the dominant culture of injustice and apostasy, they envisaged the possibility of a new covenant community, which accepts God's forgiveness and acts justly and kindly to fellow human beings. As transformative agents, they championed the cause of the neglected, they stood for the forgotten values, and they sacrificed their lives for a genuine cause. They dared to be different even when that meant isolation and rejection. Because of the authority and power of their ministry, their witness survived the test of time and was to become the model for all those who want to be transformative agents in society.

Every Christian, who is gifted by the power of the Holy Spirit, is called to become a transformative leader in his/her life context. The Church, the community of the people of God, is called to be a transforming herald by being a witness to the gospel values. That means, in the words of Oscar Romero, "When we struggle for human rights, for freedom, for dignity, when we feel that it is a ministry of the church to concern itself for those who are hungry, for those who have no schools, for those who are deprived, we are not departing from God's promise. He comes to free us from sin, and the church knows that sin's consequences are all such injustices and abuses. The church knows it is saving the world when it undertakes to speak also of such things".[29]

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[29] http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show/389392

Towards a Covenant Model of Leadership: An Interpretation of John 13

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The article begins with a reflection on leadership in the contemporary context and then undertakes a study of the footwashing scene in John 13 from a new perspective. Although traditionally the footwashing scene is known for its servant model of leadership, the rereading demonstrates that a covenant model of leadership emerges from this prophetic and symbolic action. The author then explores the meaning and implications of this biblical model for the Church and society today. A covenant model of leadership implies loving service unto death for one's covenant partners or friends, not domineering control and subjugation. The Johannine Jesus invites us to appropriate a covenant model of leadership, which values the other as friend and covenant partner, evokes reciprocity, celebrates mutuality and thus calls for shared responsibility.

Introduction

Any biblical or theological reflection of leadership presupposes a context, and is conditioned by its context to a certain extent. So let me begin my reflection with our contemporary context. We live in a fast changing world and the only thing that is constant in this world is change. The old style of leadership as "command and control" is outdated and cannot work today. Any attempt today to exercise authority and power solely from a position or title is bound to fail. Spiritual power does not come with the title or position. Moreover, position does not help much

today to earn the respect and trust of the people. We can earn respect and exercise authentic authority only when we establish credibility with people by demonstrating our intention to do the right thing (character), our knowledge as to how to do the right thing (competence) and our ability to inspire and mobilize (spiritual power). This reality reveals the paradigm shift that is taking place in our society and in the Church. This situation calls for new models of Christian leadership which are more participatory, creative, enabling and empowering. It is in this context that we ask the following questions: What kind of leadership emerges from the foot-washing story of the Gospel of John? How do we appropriate this biblical paradigm of leadership for the Church and society today?

The Fourth Evangelist speaks of the Christian community in terms of a flock (John 10) and a vine (John 15): a community attached to Jesus and abiding in Jesus. In the Johannine understanding of the Christian community, all members are branches; authority consists in the primacy of witness and not in the primacy of power and domination. Although we talk often about a servant model of leadership based on John 13, it is more in line with the synoptic traditions and Pauline spirituality than the theology of John. The servant model or the humble suffering servant model of leadership does not do justice to the Johannine Christology, which presents Jesus' death on the cross as glorification. It is therefore timely to reflect on the kind of leadership that emerges from the footwashing story of the Gospel of John from a fresh perspective in conformity with the spirituality and theology of the Fourth Evangelist.

1. An Interpretation of the Foot-washing in John 13 [1]

What follows is a narrative reading of the footwashing story told in the Gospel. We explore the meaning of the story by paying special attention to its Old Testament background and being sensitive to the overall theology of the Gospel.

i. The Footwashing as a Symbolic Action

The footwashing is a symbolic action. Commentators differ, however, as to what this act symbolizes. It has been traditionally accepted

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[1] For a detailed study of John 13 against the background of the Old Testament Covenant motif, see Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) 50-100, esp. 66-82, 89-100.

that it symbolizes in a dramatic way the humble service which the disciples are to imitate. [2] The narrator vividly describes Jesus' moves step by step: Jesus gets up from the table, takes off his outer garment, ties a towel around himself, pours water into a basin, washes the feet of his disciples, and wipes them with the towel (vv. 4-5). [3] According to Jewish traditions, actions such as taking off the outer garment and tying a towel around oneself would evoke the image of a slave. For example, a late *midrash* on Gen 21:14 recounts that when Abraham sent away Hagar, he put bread and a skin of water on her shoulder along with the child, and girded a shawl around her loins in order to let people know that she was a slave (*Yal. Sh.* 1 § 95). [4] According to the *Mekilta*'s interpretation of Exod 21:1-3, washing the feet was such demeaning work that a Hebrew slave "must not wash the feet" of his master; it was reserved for Gentile slaves (*Mek.* 58). [5] Jesus' gestures and actions are thus portrayed as very similar to those of Gentile slaves and so interpreted traditionally as the most noble and greatest example of humble service.

It seems that something more than an example of humble self-sacrificing service is implied in Jesus' footwashing. We cannot ignore

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[2] Barrett regards John 13 as "a Johannine construction based on the synoptic tradition that Jesus was in the midst of his disciples as *ho diakonon* (Luke 22:27)" (*John*, 436). See also M. Sabbe, "Footwashing in John 13 and Its Relations to the Synoptic Gospels," *ETL* 58 (1982) 279-308. Against this view, see C. Niemand, *Die Fusswaschungserzählung des Johannesevangeliums: Untersuchung zu ihrer Enstehung und Überlieferung in Urchristentum* (SA 114; Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993) 65-71. For a survey of different views, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1966-70) 2. 558-59.

[3] The evangelist highlights the *importance* of the footwashing by the long narration time allocated for the action. On "narration time" ("Erzählzeit"), see J. L. Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990) 7-8. See also the basic study of G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980) 33-85.

[4] *Yalqut Shimoni* (Vilna edition of 1898). This large midrashic compilation of various interpretations of texts from more than fifty works covers the whole Hebrew Bible. No critical edition of the collection exists; see E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B. C.- A. D. 135)* (3 vols.; ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973-87) 1. 99.

[5] *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition of the Basis of the Manuscripts and Early Editions with an English Translation* (3 vols.; trans. J. Z. Lauterbach; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1935) 3. 5. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* is a Tannaitic midrashim on Exodus 12–23; see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1. 90.

the point of view of the evangelist in interpreting the footwashing event. We must interpret Jesus washing the feet of his disciples against the background of verses 1-3. The literary setting suggests that the footwashing in itself should be viewed as both Jesus' love to the end and to the utmost (*eis telos*, 13:1c). The expression *eis telos* underscores both its quantitative or chronological meaning (to the *end* of Jesus' life) and the qualitative or christological meaning (to the *perfection* of Jesus' love).[6] J. Michl considers the footwashing as the representative and quintessential act of love symbolizing the whole ministry of Jesus.[7] In Johannine Christology, then, it is important to understand the footwashing as an act of intimate love and communion.[8] This view is further confirmed by Jewish traditions of the first century as attested in *Joseph and Asenath*.[9] After exploring the story of Asenath—in which she washes the feet of her husband-to-be, Joseph, with much devotion and love (*Jos. Asen.* 20:1-5)—Schwank proposes that the footwashing of Jesus could be a symbolic act of love that promotes and fosters communion and thus has significant ecclesiological implications.[10] On the basis of the story of Asenath, Brown also sees the possibility of interpreting the footwashing of John 13 "as a traditional act of love."[11] This interpretation fits in well with the Johannine theology of Jesus' death on the Cross as the supreme act of redemptive love (cf. 10:11; 15:13).

ii. The footwashing and the Death of Jesus

There is consensus among scholars that the meal and the footwashing in John 13 are analogous in function to the synoptic narratives of the Last Supper and the eucharistic institution (Mark 14:17-26; Luke

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[6] F. J. Moloney writes, "The marriage of both meanings produces one of the major themes for the rest of the story: Jesus' death makes known his love for his own and thus makes God known (see 3:16-17)" (*Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998], 12). See also B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972) 448.

[7] J. Michl, "Der Sinn der Fusswaschung," *Bib* 40 (1959) 697-708, esp. 701.

[8] See the discussion in G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (2d ed.; WBC 36; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999) 239-40.

[9] A Jewish work composed in between 100 B.C.E. and 100 C.E. in Alexandria.

[10] B. Schwank, "Exemplum dedi vobis: Die Fusswaschung (13, 1-17)," *SeinSend* 28 (1963) 4-17, cited by Brown, *John*, 2. 558; 564-65.

[11] Brown, *John*, 2. 564.

22:14-23; Matt 26:20-30).[12] Schneiders points out that "both the action over the bread and wine and the foot washing serve as prophetic gestures revealing the true significance of the death of Jesus within the theological perspectives of the respective evangelists."[13] The use of *tithemi* in John 13:4 suggests a thematic link between the footwashing and the death of Jesus, since the same verb *tithemi* is used for the Good Shepherd "laying down" his life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17, 18). Similarly, the verb *lambano* is used to describe both Jesus' taking up of his outer garments after the footwashing (13:12) as well as the Good Shepherd's taking up of his life again (10:17, 18).[14] If this is so, then the footwashing foreshadows and symbolizes the redemptive death of Jesus and is not merely an "example" or a "representation" (*hypodeigma*) of humble service.[15] The Fourth Evangelist will not portray Jesus' death as a moment of suffering and humiliation but as "the hour of his passing over to the Father and the moment of a consummate act of loving self-gift."[16] Jesus' death is the crowning moment of his whole earthly existence, the moment of glorification that makes known the redemptive power of God's love, revealing Jesus' love for his own (3:16-17; 10:11, 14-15), God's new chosen community.

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[12] For the sacramental and baptismal significance of the footwashing, see F. J. Moloney, "A Sacramental Reading of John 13:1-38," *CBQ* 53 (1991) 237-56; idem, *Glory not Dishonor*, 14-15; Brown, *John*, 2. 558-59; S. M. Schneiders, "The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics," *CBQ* 43 (1981) 81-82; P. Grelot, "L'interprétation pénitentielle du lavement des pieds," in *L'homme devant Dieu: Mélanges H. de Lubac* (2 vols.; Paris: Aubier, 1963) 1. 75-91; M. C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (CBET 17; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996) 283-92. Against this view, see J. C. Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (JSNTSup 61; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 19-25; Niemand, *Fusswaschungserzählung*, 252-56.

[13] Schneiders, "The Foot Washing," 81 n. 22. Schneiders underlines the revelatory character of the event by designating the footwashing as a "prophetic action." Prophetic action refers to "an action which is presented as divinely inspired, revelatory in content, proleptic in structure, symbolic in form, and pedagogical in intent" (ibid., n. 21).

[14] See J. D. G. Dunn, "The Washing of Disciples' Feet in John 13:1-20," *ZNW* 61 (1970) 248; C. R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 10-11; Culpepper, "The Johannine *Hypodeigma*," 137; Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor*, 14.

[15] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 235.

[16] Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor*, 13.

The dialogue between Jesus and Peter is another important narrative moment that helps readers to determine the symbolic meaning and significance of the footwashing (vv. 6-10).[17] The dialogue points out that what Jesus has accomplished in the footwashing is essential for the disciples to share a heritage (*meros*) with him (v. 8). What follows will explore the meaning and significance of washing and sharing a heritage (*meros*) with Jesus, topics that will take us further into Old Testament covenant motifs.

iii. The Footwashing and Covenant Relationship

Jesus' footwashing enables the disciples to have a share (*meros*) with Jesus. The response of Jesus to Peter: "If *I do not wash* you, you have no part in me" (v. 8b) suggests that it is not a question of Peter's allowing himself to be washed by Jesus but "a salvific action of Jesus is involved."[18] What is the significance of having a *meros* with Jesus within the literary and theological context of Jesus' footwashing? The OT attests the practice of footwashing as a gesture of hospitality (Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Judg 19:21; 1 Sam 25:41).[19] In the Jewish tradition, footwashing is also regarded as a preparation for meeting God. Yahweh said to Moses that Aaron and his sons should wash their hands and their feet so that they would not die (Exod 30:17-21, esp. v. 21).[20] In the OT, "washing" is also associated with the new life and the covenant relationship that one shares with God. According to the promise of the new covenant in Ezekiel, it is the washing of the people in clean water, the outpouring of the spirit, and the observances of the law, that will usher in the new age (Ezek 36:25-28).[21] This washing and cleansing on

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[17] Schnackenburg comments that "since the evangelist concentrates all his attention on the following conversation between Jesus and Peter, any attempts to provide a further interpretation are out of the question here" (*John*, 3. 18). See also Brown, *John*, 2. 565; Schneiders, "The Foot Washing," 82-83.

[18] Ibid., 2. 565.

[19] See also other Jewish documents, *T. Ab.* 7.44; *Jos. Asen.* 7.1; 13.12; 20.1-5. See also the detailed study of A. J. Hultgren, "The Johannine Footwashing (13:1-11) as Symbol of Eschatological Hospitality," *NTS* 28 (1982) 539-46, esp. 541-42.

[20] See also Philo, *QG* 4.5; 4.60; *QE* 1.2; *Mos.* 2.138; *Spec.* 1.206-7. For other Jewish documentation in support of this view, see H. Weiss, "Foot Washing in the Johannine Community," *NovT* 21(1979) 298-325, esp. 302-5.

[21] See the discussion in M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York/London, etc.: Doubleday, 1997) 726-40.

the part of Yahweh seems to be a necessary condition for the people to return to their land, their heritage (*heleq*), and to re-establish their covenant relationship (Ezek 36:28). God cleanses them and gives them a new heart that enables them to be faithful to their covenant relationship.

The LXX uses *meros/meris* to render the Hebrew *heleq* (e.g., Num 18:20). The term *heleq* refers to the God-given portion or share of the land to each tribe of Israel in the Promised Land (Deut 12:12; 14:27).[22] In the OT, *heleq* is the *inheritance* in the Promised Land that is intimately connected to and dependent on the covenant relationship. For example,

> Then the LORD said to Aaron: "You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any *share* among them; I am your *share* and your possession among the Israelites" (Num 18:20).

In the first part of the verse, *meris/heleq* refers to the God-given portion of the land, but in the second part, God becomes the *meris/heleq* for Aaron and his family members. To have a *meris/heleq* with God implies accepting God as their possession or inheritance. This status can prevail only when Aaron and his clan remain faithful to the covenant relationship with Yahweh: "you shall be my people and I shall be your God" (Ezek 36:28).

The primary meaning of *echein meros* is "to have a share with," or "be a partner with." The expression thus alludes to a fellowship or partnership with Jesus (13:8): the relationship of the disciples as Jesus' own (cf. 13:1; 15:16) and sharing the eternal heritage or reward with Jesus. The presence of the disciples with Jesus after his return to the Father is a recurring theme in John 13–17 and is developed further in 14:3 and 17:24. Beasley-Murray interprets *meros* with Jesus as *koinonia* with him in the life after death.[23] But the use of the present tense "to have a share with him" (v. 8b) suggests that *meros* with Jesus is not only a future communion but a present reality. In other words, sharing a *meros* with Jesus has both "already" and "not yet" dimensions. This understanding is further underscored by Jesus' command that the disciples wash one another's feet (13:14-15). As a present reality, sharing a

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[22] See the discussion in P. Dreyfus, "Le thème de l'héritage dans l'Ancien Testament," *RSPT* 42 (1958) 3-49.

[23] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 237.

meros with Jesus, the *koinonia* or the intimate relationship with Jesus, initiates and deepens the fellowship among the disciples. Bultmann claims that "13:1-20 describes the founding of the community and the law of its being."[24] To have *meros* with Jesus implies "to be part of the self-giving love that will bring Jesus' life to an end (cf. v. 1), symbolically anticipated by the footwashing (v. 8)."[25] In the light of the above discussion, it seems that sharing a *meros* with Jesus is best paraphrased as entering into a covenant relationship with Jesus characterized by *mutual* belonging, intimacy and commitment. The covenant overtones are further accentuated by the covenant command of Jesus, his "new commandment" (13:1-35).

iv. *Covenant Relationship and the New Commandment of Love*

The Johannine Jesus claims that he is giving a *new* commandment by exhorting his disciples *to love one another* (13:34). One needs to look into both the act of giving a commandment and the newness of this commandment. The very idea of giving a commandment (*entole*) carries covenant overtones. The Ten Commandments are given to the people within the context of establishing a covenant between Yahweh and Israel (Exod 34:10-28; Deut 4:13, etc.). Observing these commandments and other stipulations are existential imperatives for Israel to continue to be God's chosen people, or *segullah* (e.g., Exod 24:3-8; Josh 24:1-28). The Johannine Jesus gives his disciples a *new* love commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (13:34).[26] The novelty of this love commandment has been a subject of much scholarly discussion (cf. "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," Lev 19:18; "You shall love the alien [*ger*] as yourself," Lev 19:34).[27] Brown suggests that the newness consists in the context of the new covenant that reflects the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jesus and his disciples: "Behold, the days are

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[24] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 479.

[25] F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SacPag 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998) 375.

[26] Cf. the synoptic version in Mark 12:28-31//Matt 22:34-40//Luke 10:25-28. The synoptic Jesus combines both Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18.

[27] The love commandment is important in the intertestamental writings of Judaism. For example, Hillel says: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving mankind [humanity] and drawing them to the Torah" (*Abot R. Nat.* 12; *Pirqe Abot* 1.12).

coming when I will make a covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (31:31-34).[28] To claim that the love command is *new* just because it is presented within the theme of a new covenant seems insufficient. The question still remains unanswered: what is *new* about this love command even in the context of the new covenant?[29] The newness of the Johannine love command consists in (1) the aspect of its reciprocity: love *one another*, both giving/sharing and receiving love; (2) the fact that God is its source and Jesus is its model: love one another *as I have loved you* (cf. "as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you," 15:9).[30] The first aspect, "love one another," underlines the mutuality of a relationship; it is not only loving the other but also being loved by the other. The second aspect, "as I have loved you," highlights the quality of Christian love and relationship among the disciples. Referring to the use of *kathos* in 13:15, 34; 15:9-10, 12; 17:11, 21, R. Bultmann argues that the adverb *kathos* in the Gospel has both a sense of comparison and a causative or explanatory sense.[31] The disciples' love is thus both modeled after Jesus' love and is grounded in Jesus' love for them. Wiard Popkes's study points out that the adverb "*kathos* establishes a correlation containing elements of participation and of analogy or correspondence."[32] Jesus' love has been both *to the perfection* and *to the end* (*eis telos*, 13:1c) and shared generously to the extent of laying down his life for his friends (cf. 15:13). The disciples are invited to participate in Jesus' infinite love for them. The newness of the love command springs from the redemptive love of Jesus that holds the disciples in the eschatological realm. Both of these dimensions of the Johannine command, viz., the reciprocal love of the disciples and the redemptive love of Jesus/God as its source, illustrate its *newness*.

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[28] Brown, *John*, 2. 614.

[29] B. Schwank is of the opinion that there is nothing new in this commandment ("Der Weg zum Vater [13, 31–14, 11]," *SeinSend* 28 [1963] 100-14), cited by Brown, *John*, 2. 613-14.

[30] For the opinion that the love command of the Fourth Gospel is a gift, see Brown, *John*, 2. 612.

[31] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 382 n. 2. See also the detailed discussion in O. de Dinechin, "*Kathos* similitude dans l'Évangile selon saint Jean," *RechSR* 58 (1970) 195-236.

[32] W. Popkes, "Zum Verständnis der Mission bei Johannes," *ZM* 4 (1978) 66; cited by Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus and the Disciples*, 189 n. 175.

The new covenant command of Jesus insinuates that the disciples should possess the redemptive love of Jesus/God as well as exchange the love of Jesus/God among them by loving the other and being loved by the other. What the Johannine Jesus demands from the disciples—loving and thus sharing the life of Jesus/God (cf. 20:22) with one another (i.e., with one's covenant partner or the community members) —is intrinsic to the nature of an OT covenant relationship.[33] There is no better metaphor than the OT covenant relationship to describe this love and communion that should exist among the disciples, between the disciples and Jesus, and between Jesus and the Father. This covenant relationship shared among the disciples becomes the sign of their true identity in the world and enables the world to encounter Jesus after his death and resurrection (13:31-35).

2. A Covenant Model of Leadership in John 13

The Gospel of John presents a style of leadership or authority different from the traditional understanding and practice. Leadership is understood as a service rendered among friends.[34] This is explained well by the metaphor of the vine and branches in John 15. Jesus is the Vine and all members are branches. All members share the same status, just as the branches do.

The way we understand the Johannine presentation of leadership in John 13 is determined by how we understand the relationship between Jesus and his disciples in John's Gospel. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends *if you do what I command you* [emphasis mine]. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (NRSV: John 15:13-15). Keeping the commandments is an indispensable condition for being friends of Jesus since the call to be Jesus' friends is followed by a conditional clause, "if you do what I command you" (v. 14). Viewed from the perspective of the conditional clause, it is clear that Jesus is not talking about an ordinary friendship. So the question arises as to how we

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[33] Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship*, 50-66.

[34] See also Rekha M. Chennattu, "To Be Rooted and Relevant: A Call for a Paradigm Shift in the Life of Women Religious," *Vidyajyoti* 74 (2010): 7-20, esp. 17-18.

interpret the relationship that Jesus is proposing for his disciples. On the basis of v. 15, Lee suggests that "Jesus uses the language of personal friendship, overturning servile models of relationship."[35] Moreover, by using the conditional clause and the command to keep the commandments, the evangelist parallels the abiding relationship or "friendship" between Jesus and the disciples with the Old Testament covenant relationship between God and Israel. Just as Moses, the mediator of the bilateral covenant between God and Israel, is considered to be a "friend" of God (Exod 33:11a), so also the disciples are regarded as the "friends" of Jesus (John 15:14). Just as the Israelites had to obey God's voice and keep God's covenant commandments in order to be God's vine (cf. Jer 2:21; 3:13) and God's treasured possession (Exod 19:5; see also Josh 7:11; 24:25), so also the disciples are expected to keep the commandments in order to establish and maintain their friendship with Jesus and their covenant status in the community (John 15:14-15). Hence the friendship between Jesus and his disciples is best understood in terms of a covenant relationship.

The prophetic and symbolic action of foot-washing establishes an everlasting covenant relationship between Jesus and his disciples and grants them eternal life (*meros*). The Johannine Jesus regards his disciples as his friends and covenant partners (15:13-15). Based on the fact that the service rendered among friends is an expression of self-giving love, one can interpret the foot-washing as a manifestation of Jesus' self-giving friendship/covenantal love which makes his disciples equal partners.[36] Jesus, their teacher and Lord, thus overcomes the inequality that naturally exists between the Lord and his disciples by washing their feet. Jesus' prophetic and symbolic action overthrows all structures of inequality and domination and fosters mutual service in friendship/ covenantal love among his disciples. The command of Jesus is therefore not that the disciples should wash the feet of their servants or slaves as a model of humble service but rather they should "wash one another's feet" (13:14). The symbolic action of Jesus is meant to promote equality and interdependence. Leadership that emerges from John 13, therefore, implies entering into an abiding relationship with Jesus and participating in the work of Jesus to build a just and egalitarian community.

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[35] Dorothy A. Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender, and Theology in the Gospel John* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 103.

By washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus inaugurated a "new world", a new community of friends – a new covenant community! When Jesus called his disciples friends, Jesus was eradicating the inequality that naturally existed between the master and the disciples, and inaugurating a covenant model of leadership.

3. The Covenant Model of Leadership and Its Implications

The leadership presented in the Gospel of John challenges us to lead by example and by the power and wisdom of God's abiding word. Jesus invites the disciples to lead the people as he himself has done ("as I have done") that is, by dealing with his disciples as his friends and covenant partners (15:13-14). What empowers Jesus to be a dynamic, life giving leader is the realization that he has been chosen and consecrated by God (10:36). Similarly, we are here as leaders because God has chosen us, consecrated us and sent us to become co-partners with God in accomplishing God's mission (15:16). This is possible only when we abide in God's love (15:9) and abide in obedience to the project of God for humanity.

A covenant model of leadership implies loving service unto death for friends, not domineering control and subjugation. Jesus repudiates any form of authority that treats others as subjects. Jesus calls his disciples friends, but with one condition, "You are my friends, if you do what I command you" (15:14) He evokes the covenant relationship of Yahweh and the commitment of the people of Israel, thereby calling his disciples to an appropriate covenant-model of leadership, which values the other as friend and equal partner, fosters reciprocity, celebrates mutuality and thus calls for shared responsibility.

Collaborative or participatory leadership calls forth the vision and gift of others. People are blessings and gifts of God rather than functionaries and commodities to be used. Hence all are partners in mission and no one is seen as a threat. The result is a community of equals, where all contribute their different, but non-competing, abilities and talents.

The covenant model of leadership seems to be the most appropriate and adequate model for the Church, since all believers are

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[36] Schneiders, "The Foot Washing," 76-92.

called to become the children of God (1:12). Biblical leadership is understood as our participation in the project of God for the community. The basic task of leadership is to discern the way in which God is leading the community. Leadership entails providing vision and direction for the achievement of the goals of God's reign. Leaders are called to equip and empower others to be at the service of God's project.

In conclusion, in the covenant model of leadership presented by John's Gospel, authority is not for domination, but for mutual service in love unto death. It is characterized by quality service, participation and fair treatment, transparency and accountability. Freedom with responsibility is yet another feature of the covenant model of leadership. When freedom is given and authority is delegated to members, they are expected to be responsible and accountable to the leaders concerning their performance regarding all the duties assigned to them. Far from insisting on conformity to one or the other set pattern, it encourages diversity and plurality. The well-being of the entire community determines the choices and decisions. In such an atmosphere, relationships are mutual and collaborative rather than hierarchical. The task of leadership, in place of control from above, becomes animation from within to build up an egalitarian community of covenant partners or friends.

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Pauline Model of Leadership

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Until recently, Paul was most often quoted for doctrinal reasons or mentioned as a ground-breaking missionary. But now, he has been recognized as an inspiring and effective leader. His genius and zeal continue to inspire Church leaders. He was truly a *transformational* leader in so far as he transformed himself, transformed and motivated his team members and the communities as a whole. He was an exceptional leader of a team of collaborators belonging to a cross-section of society. He recognized their abilities and roles, gave enough room for autonomy and personal initiative. He redefined leadership more in terms of '*being*' than '*doing*'. In the exercise of leadership, he discovered the necessary vision in the Gospel, and in Jesus he found its model. In this way, mission became an expression of his passion for Christ, leadership promoted inclusive partnership, personal relationship nurtured communion, theology produced Gospel-based creative responses capable of transforming societies, and authority took on the form of self-less service. The Church of today can surely learn much from Paul in her efforts to evolve alternative models of leadership. Leadership in the Church cannot but be an imitation of the leadership style of Christ. The one who internalized this model totally and put it into practice effectively is Paul.

Introduction

Leadership has become not just a popular but an all important topic. Leadership programmes are commonplace in corporate houses and government departments. Many churches are focusing on the

leadership skills of their pastors,[1] because they think that crises in the Church are partly related to crisis in leadership. A good leader organizes oneself and others, and develops structures capable of adapting themselves to new circumstances and generating new ideas on a continuous basis. Innovative leadership characterizes modern world system. Team ministry and synergy have become well-worn terms both in society and the Church.

Until recently, Paul was most often quoted for doctrinal reasons or mentioned as a ground-breaking missionary. But now, he has been recognized as an inspiring and effective leader. His genius and zeal have inspired Church leaders of all times. He did so much pioneering work with such remarkable zeal, unparalleled in the history of the Church. He started with virtually nothing except his *faith and passion*, yet built a network of communities across the then known world. Now, almost two thousand years later, the heritage of these communities continues in the faith tradition. Hence, by the benchmarks of leadership, we would have to rate him near the top in long-term effectiveness.[2] Although he has not left behind a tract on Christian leadership, we can find both in the Acts and in his own letters many basic elements that go into the making of an effective leader.

We shall reflect on certain aspects of the leadership roles of Paul under four headings: *Leadership as Relationship, Spiritual Leadership, Intellectual Leadership and Pastoral Leadership*. There is a certain unavoidable overlapping of areas.

1. Leadership as Relationship

Paul, more than anyone else, had understood that leadership is relationship. One should not consider Pauline model of collaborative ministry merely from a functional point of view, i.e. for the sake of effective management and results. He worked through his relationships. His co-workers were not mere agents. He cultivated deep and sincere relationships both with his communities and individual ministers.

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[1] R. S. Ascough & S. Cotton, *Passionate Visionary*: *Leadership Lessons from the Apostle Paul* (Indian Reprint; Mumbai: St Pauls, 2006) 9.

[2] R. S. Ascough & S. Cotton, *Passionate Visionary*, 10.

Thessalonians were praised for their exemplary life (1 Thess 1:7-8) and so too Philippians (Phil 1:5-7; 4:15). His appreciation of Timothy (Phil 2:19-24) and concern for Titus (2 Cor 1:23-2:13) Epaphroditus (Phil 2:27) and Onesimus (Phlm 8-14) are remarkable. This personal attention qualifies him to be a *transformational* leader. Many of the terms that he used to qualify his *co-workers*[3] (*fellow*-servants, *fellow*-sufferers and *fellow*-prisoners) emphasize the personal dimension and indicate his genuine appreciation for them and their ministry. *Extensive use of family terminology and parental images*, etc., further emphasize the relationship model of leadership.[4] Timothy was like a son to him, some others were *adelphos / adelphç*.[5] The use of the term 'beloved' is particularly noteworthy.[6] The experience of communion led to a ministry of building up communities for communion. In short, he was creating the *human capital* that would make the ministry an experience of communion.

i. Communication through Personal Visits and Emissaries

Though his work was very demanding, he made it a point to visit his communities or at least expressed his deep desire to do so (1 Thess 2:17-3:5; 2 Cor 2:12-3:4). It was necessary because his first stay in a community was usually short giving very little time for the much needed nurturing of faith.[7] When he could not visit the communities he communicated with them through his envoys. They were to represent

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[3] His use of *synergos is unique in the New Testament*. For a detailed study of Paul's use of this term, see T. Manjaly, *Collaborative Ministry : An Exegetical and Theological Study of Synergos in Paul* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2001).

[4] Robert Banks discusses at length the use of family terminology. See R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of the Community* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980) 52- 61.

[5] The *adelphoi* (brethren) includes brothers and sisters (Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 1:8; Gal 1:11). Phoebe (Rom 16:1) and Apphia (Phlm 2) are called 'sister'.

[6] It is used in a variety of ways: 'God's beloved' (Rom 1:7; 1 Thess 1:4), Paul's 'beloved' (1 Cor 15:58; 2 Cor 7:1; 12:19) or as Paul's 'beloved' children (1 Cor 4:14). Among the individuals addressed as 'beloved' are Timothy (1 Cor 4:17), Epaenetus (Rom 16:5), Ampliatus (Rom 16:8), Stachys (Rom 16:9) and Persis (Rom 16:12).

[7] The exceptions are Corinth about 2 years and Ephesus for about 3 years (during the third journey).

the apostle to the communities and as such their visit was considered by the communities as the visit of the apostle himself.[8]

ii. Communication through Correspondence

Paul's letters had an important function of communicating and building up strong *personal relationships* with individuals (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:20-22) and communities (1 Cor 16:5-9; Phil 1:7). This is reflected clearly in initial greetings (except the letter to the Galatians), in the body, and almost invariably in the final greetings of the letters. He associated with himself his co-workers in writing the letters and addressed letters to his trusted associates like Timothy and Titus. These letters give very valuable guidelines to discharge their pastoral responsibilities. The personal aspect is reflected also in the way he dealt with ethical questions. Being essentially a *pastoral* theologian, he dealt with them from a pastoral perspective.[9]

iii. Inspiring and Enabling Leadership

Though he had a wide circle of co-workers at various levels, he exercised leadership *as father, mother* and founder of communities (1 Cor 3:10; 4:15), and not only as apostle (1 Cor 9:1-2; Gal 1:1,15-16). The participatory dimension of ministry helped him to understand that ministers are only *servants* (1 Cor 3:5; 5:20), and ministry is *diakonia* and grace (1 Cor 3:5-6). He exercised leadership to inspire and enthuse others. He understood his leadership role in terms of animating, inspiring, encouraging and building up, for he stated that his role was "for building up, and not for tearing down" (2 Cor 13:10).

Prior to Damascus experience, Paul was an enforcer of a system, but now he is *encourager* of the new way. He exercised leadership in the community as an apostle par excellence (1 Cor 9:1-2; Gal 1:1,15-16)

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[8] Sending the envoys was part of his communication strategy. Two of them deserve special mention: Timothy (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Cor 4:17; 1 Thess 3:1-3) and Titus (2 Cor 2:13; 7:13-15; 8:22-23). See E.J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* vol. II (Downers Grove, Ill. / Leicester: InterVarsity / Apollos, 2004) 1320, 1322-23, 1362-1364.

[9] 1 Corinthians is a typical example of how Paul, as a person with great pastoral sensitivity, and wanting to see their growth in faith, dealt with such questions with love, prudence and pastoral zeal. But he never compromised on the fundamental truths, even at the risk of becoming unpopular (1-2 Cor and Gal).

and father of communities. Gal 1:13-24 presents Paul's journey from being a *transactional manager* to being a *transformational leader.*[10] He exercised his leadership by way of delegation He delegated power to his co-workers, assigned various functions to them, sent them as his envoys, commended them for their significant contribution (1 Cor 16:10-11, 15-18) and qualified them with various titles to show his appreciation for them as well as to indicate the type of ministry they were engaged in (Rom 16:1-21). Like an Orchestra conductor, Paul realized that though his role was necessary, he was not the orchestra. But he did exercise his apostolic authority when the need arose (1 Cor 5-7).

iv. Building Bridges and Reconciling Communities

There were instances of strained relationships e.g. with Barnabas regarding John Mark (Acts 15:36-41). Later, Paul made up with Barnabas as he pays tribute to him (1 Cor 9:6) and with Mark (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11). He had differences with Peter, yet he submitted himself to the latter's authority (Gal 2:6-14). Apollos had caused some confusion in Corinth (1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:5-7). But Paul was gracious and generous in commending him to the Corinthian community (1 Cor 16:12). There was serious disagreement between his coworkers, Euodia and Synteche. He appealed to them to be reconciled with each other (Phil 4:2-3). He was large-hearted to forgive the one who caused so much pain to him (2 Cor 2:5-11) and the Corinthians themselves.[11] The great collection project he organized had, besides helping the poor in the Jerusalem Church, the scope of bringing about reconciliation and fellowship between the gentile and Jewish Christian communities (2 Cor 8-9; Rom 15:26-27; Gal 2:9-10).

He was respectful in dissent, magnanimous in the face of opposition, generous in forgiving and caring towards all. This is because he had the ability to look beyond personal interests to wider horizons of mission to preach the Gospel. For the cause of Jesus Christ, personal differences were transcended and transformed into opportunities (Phil 1:15-18). This was the result of his understanding of reconciliation

[10] R. S. Ascough & S. Cotton, *Passionate Visionary*, 24.

[11] His conciliatory attitude is well reflected in the tone, the style and the language he uses in this letter. Compare 2 Cor 10-13 with 1-9.

as 'new creation', bringing about a 'new outlook' on others, and of his consciousness of being ministers of this process (2 Cor 5:17-20).[12]

2. Spiritual Leadership

Paul's spiritual heritage was Jewish as he was reared in the creeds of a devout Jew of his time (Gal 1:14). Spiritual leadership for him meant the primacy of prayer, commitment, conviction and service to others.

i. Primacy of Prayer

Paul gave supremely important place for prayer which in fact determines his quality as a leader. It was fundamental to his mission, not anything that supplemented his work. He was a man of action because he was a man of prayer. His prayer was related to his ministry.[13] In the silence of Arabian deserts he deepened his experience of the risen Lord before launching his mission (Gal 1:17). He was an "Apostle in the presence of God."[14] What we hear about him after the Damascus experience is very remarkable: "At the moment he is praying" (Acts 9:4).[15] In prayer he recognized his own fragility and vulnerability (2 Cor 12:8-11; Phil 4:13).[16] He was aware that his vocation and mission were wholly dependent on divine grace (Rom 15:15; Gal 1:15; 2 Cor 4:1; Eph 3:2).[17] This awareness directed him further to prayer as an expression of gratitude to God.

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[12] Mary Ann Getty, "The Ministry in a Reconciled Community," *The Bible Today* 37/5 (1999) 155-161.

[13] L. M. Bermejo, *Paul, Missionary, Mystic, Martyr* (Anand: Gujrat Sahitya Prakash, 2007) 310-319; F. Pereira, "Prayer in St. Paul," *Bible Bhashyam 5* (1979) 40-62.

[14] For this citation from L. Cerfaux see L. Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990) 129.

[15] T. d'Aquino Sequeira, "Prayer: A Pauline Perspective," *Jeevadhara* 33/194 (2003) 142-151, here 148-149.

[16] T. Manjaly, "For me to live is Christ' (Phil 1:21): Contours of Pauline in Spirituality," in *Learning from Paul: Reflections for the Pauline Year*, eds., S. J. Puykunnel & J. Varickasseril (Shillong: Vendrame Institute & DBCIC, 2008) 10-33, here, 26-27.

[17] P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission, in the Writings of Paul. An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, Mich. / Carlisle: Baker / Paternoster Press, 1995) 30.

Paul prayed for his communities' growth in Christ: "... so that your love may grow ever more *in the knowledge and every kind of perception*" (Phil 1:9; 3-11).[18] Paul's missionary prayer was like that of Jesus (Jn 17). As he found strength in prayer, he exhorted others to do the same (Rom 12:12). He asked Timothy to pray for his community (1 Tim 2:1). He commended himself and his ministry to the prayer support of the Christians (Rom 15:30-32; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Cor 1:11). Luke presents Paul surrounded by the prayer of the community.[19] His own prayer (1 Thess 1:2; 3:10; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3-4) and his exhortation to others to pray (1 Thess 5:17-18; 1 Cor 7:5; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2), bring out the importance that prayer had for the effectiveness of his ministry.[20] By means of prayer he cultivated communion as it united him and his churches in their relations "both with each other and with their heavenly Lord." [21]

ii. Motivation and Commitment to Mission

Paul possessed within him that one quality which is necessary to be a leader –*Passion*. He was *passionate* about everything that he undertook, first in his defence of the tradition of his ancestors (Gal 1:14), and then about Jesus and his 'Gospel'. He was convinced that the uncontrolled spread of the 'Jesus movement' (preached by Stephen) would undermine the very foundations of Judaism – the temple and the law. Such was Paul's zeal that he began a fierce campaign against the newly born Christian community, moving from house to house to destroy everyone who professed the name of Jesus, the Christ (Acts 8:3). Thus we find in him a man who is passionate, zealous, committed and persevering to the end to achieve the set goals.

What really added quality to his commitment is the fact that he was motivated by the love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14) and the passion for Christ (Phil 3:38). Nothing, not even death, could separate him from the

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[18] Rom 1:8-10; 1 Cor 1:4-5; Eph 3:16-19; Col 1:9-11.

[19] Acts 16:25; 20:36; 21:5, 20; 27:35; 28:8, 15.

[20] Most of his letters begin with a reference to prayer: Rom 1:8-12; 1 Cor 1:4-9; 2 Cor 1:3-5; Phil 1:3-11; 1 Thess 1:2-4; 2 Thess 1:3-5; Phlm 4-5; Eph 1:3-13.

[21] S. C. Barton, "Paul as Missionary and Pastor," in *Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed., J.D.G. Dunn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)46.

love of God (Rom 8:38-39).[22] It is this love-driven motivation and conviction that explain adequately his irresistible urge to proclaim the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16) because in the Gospel he experienced the transforming power of God (Rom 1:16). Paul stands out as model of a leader who can transform societies if one is motivated by love and charged with conviction and passion. For such persons crises are opportunities, and difficulties turn into creative energy.

Paul's commitment to ministry can be characterized as *responsible stewardship* because it *is an essential characteristic of a trustworthy disciple*.[23] This is expressed by a variety of terms and images.[24] Notable among them are: *apostle* (1 Thess 2:6; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1), *servant* (I Cor 3:5), *slave* (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1), *builder* (1 Cor 3:10-11), *steward* (1 Cor 4:2; Eph 3,3; Col 1:25), *soldier* (2 Tim 2:3-4; 4,7; Phil 2:25; Phlm 2), and *approved labourer* (1 Thess 2:4-6; 1 Cor 3:10-11). They help us to understand what Paul meant by strong commitment, single-mindedness, urgency and fidelity in the midst of struggles, opposition, suffering and persecution. Ministry calls for accountability to God/Jesus, to the co-workers and to the community at large.

iii. Leading by Example

Parental responsibility required of Paul that he nurtured his 'children' through personal example for imitation (1 Cor 4:16). As their 'father' he tried to embody in himself the Gospel and give visibility to Christian life. So he would say that the ministers were 'carrying in their body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in their bodies' (2 Cor 4:10). Hence, he could claim that he was mediating Christ and hence appeal to the communities to imitate him, "Become

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[22] He considered suffering in fact as integral to his call to mission. See the tribulation lists: Phil 4:12; Rom 8:35; 1 Cor 1: 18-25; 4:10-13a; 2 Cor 4:8-12; 6:4-5, 8-10;11:23b-29; 12:10.

[23] J. McRaith, "The Disciple of Christ as Steward," *The Bible Today* 40/5 (2002) 291-295, here, 293. See also, J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Paul and Stewardship," *The Bible Today* 40/5 (2002) 285-289.

[24] See T. Manjaly, *Collaborative Ministry,* 39-48.

imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6; Phil 3:17) and ultimately 'become imitators of God' (Eph 5:1).

As he thought of himself as a father and mother he could say with personal authority that his communities should take him as a model. According to him, this is what distinguished him from other teachers and guides (1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:6-8; cf. 2:1-12). He proposed his hard work and financial self-support as examples to be imitated (2 Thess 3:8). He presented himself as a model to the church elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:18b-35) and to Timothy (2 Tim 4:10-11), who himself was projected as an example (Phil 2:19-23). His message was effective because of the kind of the person that he was (1 Thess 1:5).

Paul presented his co-workers too as models. He commended them for their integrity of life.[25] Understanding the importance of personal credibility, he warned Timothy regarding the choice of leaders (1 Tim 3:1-13; 4:12; 5:22). The communities were also models. – the Philippians and the Thessalonians.[26] The Christ-centred life of Paul (Gal 2:20; Phil1:21) and of others contributed to a large extent to their pastoral effectiveness.

iv. Servant Leadership

To the contemporary mind, the notions of leadership and service may not mix.[27] But Jesus demanded of those who are to be leaders in his community that they should be found as those who serve (Jn 13:1-17; Lk 22:24-30). Though Paul exercised authority as an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-2; Gal 1:1.15-16) and founder of communities (1 Cor 3:10), he understood authority and service/love as complementary dimensions of

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[25] Timothy - 1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:19-23; 1 Thess 3:1-2; Titus - 2 Cor 8:22-24; Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15-16).

[26] The churches in Judea were a model for the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:14), the Thessalonians for those in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess 1:7-10) and the Philippians for all (Phil 1:3-7; 4:14-18). The authentic life of these communities bore witness to the power of the Word (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 1:4, 11).

[27] W. F. Maestri, *Paul's Pastoral Vision* (New York: Alba House, 1989) 38.

leadership. He understood the effectiveness of a creative exercise of authority.[28] He was *persuasive*, without being manipulative.

Though he applied to himself the term *apostolos* (1 Thess 2:6; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1) and in a broader sense to others[29], his *preferred titles* for the ministers are *diakonos / diakonia*,[30] *doulos* (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1), and *oikonomos* (1 Cor 4:2; Col 1:25).[31] They indicate availability, faithfulness and accountability to the master on the one hand and self-emptying humble service to the community on the other. Jesus, the servant, who came to serve unto death (Mk 10:43-45; Mt 20:26-28), took the form of a slave (Phil 2:6-7) and washed the feet of the disciples and charged them to do so (Jn 13:4-16), was his model. He proposed the same to others (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 2:5). For him, ministry was grace (1 Cor 3:5-6; Rom 1:5), authority came from Christ (2 Cor 3:6) and the Gospel served as the 'operation–manual' for Christian leaders

Suffering / giving one's life for others is integral to servant leadership. It 'validates the message,' and commends them as true *ambassadors of Christ* (2 Cor 5:20).[32] In a special way, suffering and weakness reveal that ministry is rooted in and is carried out by God's power (2 Cor 12:9-10) which can be revealed only when the messengers

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[28] His understanding of authority is to be seen in a combination of his role as an apostle and father / mother (parent). See E. Best, "Paul's Apostolic Authority," *JSNT* 27 (1986) 3-25, here, 15-17.

[29] 1 Thess 2:7; 1 Cor 4:9; 9:5; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; Rom 16:7.

[30] *Diakonos*: 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:3-6,9; Rom 15:8; 16:1; Phil 1:1; *diakonia*: 1 Cor 12:5; 2 Cor 4:1; 5:18-19. The term *diakonia* emphasizes the attitude of being at the service, not a position of carrying with it rights and powers. See, E. Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press 1961) 174.

[31] Other terms like *soldier* (2 Tim 2:3-4; 4:7; Phil 2:25; Phlm 2), *farmer/planter* (2 Tim 2:6; 1 Cor 3:6-9; 9:10-11) *approved labourer* (1 Thess 2:4-6; 1 Cor 3:10-11) or a *prisoner* for Christ (2 Tim 2:8-9; Phlm 9) were more frequently used than terms like *archē* (head / dignity) or *timē* (honour), that have to do with power, authority and social status. See T. Manjaly, "Missionary and Pastoral Images in 2 Tim 2, 1-26," *Indian Missiological Review* 19 (1997) 81–90, especially pp. 82-89.

[32] Suffering and hardships are hardly *ambassadorial credentials* (2 Cor 4: 8-12; 6:4-5). But he wanted to make it clear that he is an ambassador of the sinless one who through his death reconciled the world to God (2 Cor 5:16-21). S.C. Barton, "Paul as Missionary and Pastor," 36-37.

and the message (of the Cross) are consonant with each other (1 Cor 1:18). Further, suffering is a way of manifesting God's power in the midst of human weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10; 1 Cor 1:25). Paul saw his suffering as a 'corollary' of Christ's suffering (2 Cor 1:7; 4:8-12; 11:2-4; Col 1:24). In this way the ministers imitate Jesus, by actualizing the Gospel of the Cross, and they in turn become models of imitation (1 Thess 1:6; 1 Cor 11:1). He also accepted suffering as an expression of his 'wounded' love as their father: 'to spend and be utterly spent' (2 Cor 12:15).[33]

Ministry also places ministers in a special relationship with the community: not as an object of their work, but as God's possession (1 Cor 3:9), only to build it up as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12; Rom 12; Eph 4). The collaborative aspect of ministry which emphasizes dependence and inter-dependence, expressed through the need for and appreciation of others, helped him to understand ministry as an expression of the *servant role* of the Church, and leadership as *servant leadership* (1 Cor 3:5; 4:1; 5:20). The ministers are co-workers among themselves, but only as servants of the Lord (1 Cor 3:6-8; 4:1; 2 Cor 4:7; 5:20).

3. Intellectual Leadership

The intellectual and cosmopolitan atmosphere of Tarsus had a lasting impact on Paul's intellectual life. He learned Greek, had some training in Greek literary world (e.g. method of letter writing or use of rhetoric) and was in touch with Greek philosophical world, particularly stoicism (use of diatribe). His familiarity with that culture is evident in his use of terms (athlete, mystery, virtue, conscience, etc.). But he was also thoroughly a Jew by birth and upbringing (Phil 3:4-5; Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22). He was proud of being a Pharisee, educated under Gamaliel who was one of the best-known Rabbis of the Hillel school (Gal 1:14). Thus, he had a very strong intellectual background of two traditions.

i. Pastoral Theologian

Paul was basically a pastoral theologian. Actual life situations and pastoral needs prompted his theological reflections. His intellectual

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[33] R. Plunkett-Dowling, "Paul the Wounded Father," *The Bible Today* 37/5 (1999) 15154, here, 154.

upbringing along with his experience of the risen Lord equipped him to be an *original theologian* and made his theological reflections profoundly experiential, highly intellectual and pastorally relevant. He was able to give *transformative Gospel responses* to situations. His insight into the mystery of Christ and God's plan of salvation remains unique and unmatched as it comes from the depths of his experience (Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21). This experience enabled him to formulate his Gospel of the grace of God in Christ (Gal 1:15-16).

He was both theoretical and practical in his approach to problems.[34] Ethical life for him was living out one's identity, not just external conformity to norms. He argued from the *indicative* of being a Christian, to the *imperative* of ethical demands (1 Cor 6: 15-18.19-20; Eph 4:1; Col 3:1-3). He looked at moral questions from the point of view of building up the community (1 Cor 5:6-8; 6:12; 8:1).

Paul understood the lasting value of the written text. His letters constitute nearly a third of the New Testament.[35] All his undisputed letters were written even before the first Gospel was composed. Therefore, Pauline communities had access to the basic Gospel tradition. A considerable part of Christian doctrine can be traced back to his letters.[36] His theology is characterized by its *Christ-centredness, ecclesiological orientation and emphasis on eschatological perspective.* He was able to give an original vision. He was truly a pioneer in theologizing.

ii. Respect for the Tradition

Though Paul had attached great importance to the uniqueness of the revelation that he received (Gal 1:1, 12), he was particular about

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[34] He handles various ethical questions (1 Cor 5-7), and pastoral issues such as division in the community (1 Cor 1-4), Eucharistic gathering (1 Cor 11) charisms (1 Cor 11-3), resurrection of Christians (1 Cor 15).

[35] Of the 260 chapters in the New Testament, Paul has some 87 of them, and 13 books of 27 NT books which make up the single most important 'library' of personal testimony from the first Christian century.

[36] Paul presents theological questions such as justification by faith, and redemption (Rom-Gal), Christology (Phil-Col), mystery of the Church (1 Cor-Eph-Col), sacraments - baptism (Rom 6) the Eucharist (1 Cor 11), marriage (1 Cor 7; Eph 5) and ministry (1-2 Cor; 1-2 Tim), and eschatology (e.g. 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:13-5:11).

transmitting the apostolic tradition and the customs and practices of the Church. His teaching on Resurrection (1 Cor 15:3-58: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received" – v. 3) is based on the tradition that he had received. But the tradition about Jesus that he received went through a thorough transformation and the result is what he called 'my Gospel' (Gal (1:8,9,11). Paul exhorts the Christians at Corinth to maintain the traditions which he had delivered to them (1 Cor 11:2), and to follow the customs and practices of the local church (1 Cor 11:16). He kept on repeating to his beloved co-worker Timothy how the latter should ensure faithfulness to the faith-traditions and observance of the customs and practices (see 1-2 Tim passim). This is all the more so with regard to the essentials of faith (1 Tim 2:5-6; 3:14-16; 2 Tim 1:8-10), and proper understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:10-17).

iii. Pioneering Dialogue

Paul was a pioneer in the area of religious and cultural dialogue. The *Areopagus* speech is an attempt towards understanding mission as dialogue, but not the only one (Acts 17:22-34. cf. 14:13-17). He showed genuine appreciation of their longing for God, but challenged the cult of pagan gods. He took a positive stand towards the Greek religion and its search for the transcendent, when he quoted the Greek poets, "in him we live and move and have our being... for we are indeed his offspring" (Acts 17:28). He was stressing the need to complement the pole of transcendence (biblical perspective) by the pole of immanence (Stoic). He was thus laying the foundations of a theology of continuity, engagement and dialogue. He was prepared to express the message of the Gospel in the categories of the culture and history of the receivers. In Paul, Jerusalem and Athens began to understand and dialogue with each other.'[37] He was *creative* and *innovative* in presenting the Gospel to his audience.

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[37] L. Legrand, "The Missionary Significance of Areopagus Speech," in *God's Word among Men: Theological Essays in honour of Joseph Putz SJ*: ed., G. Gispert-Sauch (Delhi: Vidyajyoti, 1973) 59-71, here, 69-71; T. Manjaly, "Gospel – Culture interface: A Biblical approach," *Omnis Terra 36*, no. 324 (2002) 62-75, here, 68.

4. Pastoral Leadership

Paul was aware of what was happening in his communities through personal contacts, his trusted emissaries or travelling evangelizers and visitors (1 Cor 1:11).

i. Shared Vision

His intellectual as well as religious upbringing, no doubt, helped him to develop a vision of life and its problems. An often-quoted biblical text emphasizes the need for vision: "Where there is no vision, people perish" (Prov 29:18). But, a vision that is not shared with others will turn out to be worthless, and the leaders who cannot do so will turn out to be less effective too.[38] The risen Lord left behind a vision for his Church (Mk 16:15; Mt 28:18-20). Acts 1:8 presents a global vision for the evangelizing mission of the Church: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." Paul was to follow this vision as he states, "From Jerusalem and as far as Illyricum (on the west side of Macedonia) I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ" (Rom 15:19). He shared this vision of his Master with the Christians in Rome and wanted to enlist their support and cooperation for his mission in Europe (15:17-29). He wanted them to be as passionate as himself. Further, he *prioritized* his concerns and evolved appropriate strategies.

ii. Evangelization Strategy[39]

One important aspect of his mission strategy was that Paul, *after founding a community, and preparing local leaders, would move on to another place*, though of course he kept in touch with them through personal visits and emissaries (1 Thess 3:1-5; 1 Cor 4:16-20; Phil 2:19-30) and letters (1 Cor chs.1-4,5-7,10-11). This ensured both mobility, essential for a worldwide mission, and the necessary pastoral contact with the already existing communities.

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[38] R.S. Ascough & S. Cotton, *Passionate Visionary*, 31.

[39] A very good recent presentation of the topic is E.J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* vol. II, 1293 – 1495, especially 1294-1309, 1320-1323, 1359-1362, 1421-1425, 1445-1451.

His mission strategy is further evident in the *choice of the centres* where he established his communities, usually *urban commercial/ religious / cultural centres*, which naturally brought together a cross-section of the people and from where the message of the Gospel could radiate outward to the surrounding areas. The residents of these centres were themselves influential people, educated, socially acceptable and financially sound. These in turn provided a context for the emergence of leadership. He chose as *his co-workers* only those who were known for their integrity and commitment, and with some leadership qualities. Yet, another important method he used was to *make himself financially independent* of the communities. His tent-making expertise ensured also *contact with people* with similar interests and good customers (Acts 16:3; cf. I Thess 2:9; Phil 4:14-18).

Paul had an approach that was very appropriate to the situation. Usually he (and Barnabas) would look out for the synagogue where the Jews / Jewish sympathizers of the town gathered for discussion on matters of faith and worship. He chose to be in their midst, basing his discussions on the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), to show that the crucified Jesus, now risen, is the Lord and the Messiah (Acts 18:5; 23:6; 26:6-8).

The process of *strengthening the faith and encouraging* was an important part of Paul's evangelization strategy.[40] Further, he dealt with deeper questions of faith and justification (Rom - Gal), Christological questions (Phil-Col) or practical questions of Christian living (1Cor 5-7). The proclamation of the Gospel was followed up systematically in order to form a community rooted and built up in Christ (Col 2:7).

iii. Participatory Leadership

Paul's understanding of participatory ministry was not sociological, but theological as fulfillment of his mission to proclaim the Gospel. He is usually characterized as a solitary genius who went about founding Christian communities (1 Cor 3:10-11; Rom 15:20). But, his vision of ministry as a collaborative effort requires greater attention. Historically and theologically Paul was a team-man. His images of the Church and ministry as mentioned above, his teaching on charisms and

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[40] He used two Greek words *sterixein* - to strengthen or deepen the faith of others (1 Thess 3:2,13; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:3; Rom 1:11; 16:25). *and parakalein* - to exhort, encourage, or comfort.

ministries (1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-30; Rom 12:4-8) and the various designations for ministry and ministers are indicative of his vision of a collaborative ministry. While he accepted and appreciated *functional differences in ministries*, he insisted that these differences should be transcended for the sake of the common goal of building up the body of Christ (1 Cor 12-14).

Paul began his ministry at the invitation of Ananias. Later on, Barnabas became his mentor. As a team, Barnabas and Paul were sent to Antioch (Acts 11:30) and to the Diaspora (Acts 13:2). When the two fell out with each other (Acts 15,37-40), Paul started a new configuration of co-workers: first Silas, later on Timothy and Titus, gradually inducting new members, such as local leaders including women, according to the need. The long list of co-workers mentioned in Rom 16, provides a wide spectrum of participatory ministry and the variety and scope of the areas of ministry.

a. Promoting Lay Collaboration

There were many *lay people* among his close co-workers. Of the almost 100 persons referred to as Paul's collaborators, a good number of them were lay leaders. Rom 16:1-16 names 29 persons, most of whom are lay men and women. It is true that not all were equally associated with Paul. They were house church leaders, patrons of ministers, official delegates of churches. Some of them were chosen by him, others were already leaders of local churches. But he considered and recognized all of them as his co-workers. It also reveals different patterns of leadership that were in existence in the early Church. Prisca (also called Priscilla) and Aquila are among the more prominent lay leaders (Rom 16:3-5a; 1 Cor 16:19; cf. Acts 18:2-3.18-19).[41] Paul spent considerable time with them (Acts 18:2-3). They instructed Apollos on matters of faith (Acts 18:26). Andronicus and Junia were another missionary couple.[42] Some other outstanding lay leaders were Epaphroditus who is qualified as brother, co-worker and fellow-soldier (Phil 2:25), Epaphras who

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[41] P. A. Sampathkumar, "Aquila and Priscilla: A Family at the Service of the Word," *Indian Theological Studies* 34/1-3 (1997) 185-201, here 188-201; T. Manjaly, "Paul's Vision of Collaborative Ministry," *Verbum SVD* 50/1 (2009) 31-56, here,41-43.

[42] It implies that Paul takes Junia as a woman. On Junia see E. J. Epp, Junia: *The First Woman Apostle*

evangelized the Lycus valley (Col 1:6-8; 4:13) and fellow prisoner with Paul and others (Phlm 1, 7, 23).

b. Empowering Women Leaders

Those who consider Paul as anti-women on the basis of some misunderstood and misinterpreted texts, forget the fact that some of his best co-workers were women. Paul's thought on and attitude to women has to be based on Gal 3:26-28 (1 Cor 7:16; Eph 5:5, 2 5-27; Col 3:11), where he clearly affirms the equality of women. His teaching on charisms (1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-30; Eph 4:11-16) does not indicate any type of exclusiveness. He was clearly positive towards women. They were his partners in mission and empowered leaders of the community. He did lay down sound principles for equality between men and women (cf. Gal 3:26-28; 1 Cor 7:16).[43] Paul had a number of women collaborators such as Lydia (Acts 16:13-15), Prisca (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3), Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Junia (Rom 16:7), Euodia and Synteche (Phil 4:2-3) and many others (Rom ch. 16).[44] They were not mere helpers, but were empowered leaders and partners in mission. They had responsible functions to fulfill in communities, as can be seen from the titles that he uses to qualify them and their ministry. Prisca may be considered the first woman theologian who tutored the learned Alexandrian Jewish Christian Apollos.

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[43] Paul's view on women was definitely a breakthrough in a male dominated world. He may not have campaigned actively for a greater role for women in ministry or for women's emancipation, but made a breakthrough in a male-dominated society of his day. Besides, he should be understood against the then prevailing socio-cultural background. See Rekha M. Chennattu, "Reciprocal Partnership and Inclusive Leadership. Exploring Paul's Attitudes to Women," in *Learning from Paul: Reflections for the Pauline Year*, 139-157. IDEM, "Paul's Understanding of Women's Place in the Church," *Jnanadeepa* 12 (2009) 261-279.

[44] Other women co-workers who received special mention by Paul are: Tryphana and Tryphosa, labourers for the Lord (Rom 16:12); Persis, a hard worker for the Lord (Rom 16,12); Mary, at the service of the Christians (Rom, 16:6), and Julia (Rom 16:15); Nympha, who hosted a house church (Col 4:15); Euodia and Synteche, Paul's close women co-workers and leaders of the Philippian church (Phil 4:2-3); Apphia, named sister in the sense of a missionary colleague (Phlm 1-2) and Eunice, who provided for the missionaries on their journeys (2 Tim 1:5).

Paul understood the power and effectiveness of feminine genius. Realizing their God-given unique capacity for nurturing life he included them in his team. In Rom 16:1-16, we find that eight women, who are named, were given titles connected with mission and service in the Church which he applied to himself and to his male co-workers.[45]

We can reasonably conclude that in spite of ambiguities regarding the meaning of *diakonos* and *prostatis* (Phoebe) and *apostolos* (Junia) as applied to these women, and considering tendencies to relativize women's role in mission on the claim that Paul subordinates their part, he accepted them as his colleagues in mission and recognized their leadership in the communities. What was considered opposites by society (e.g. male-female distinction), he turned into complementary roles for building up communities. When Paul highlighted the role of his women co-workers, he was just putting into practice his new vision of humanity in Christ where religious, social and gender discrimination does not exist (Gal 3:26-28),[46] and was sharing the vision of Jesus who re-defined radically the place of women in his community.

Conclusion

Paul has been not just a pioneer missionary, but a *transformational* leader and has left behind a new paradigm of leadership. While there is so much emphasis on leadership in the secular world, the Church too needs to think of evolving new, relevant and life-giving models of leadership. This need not be done necessarily by blindly following sociological or corporate models, but by returning to the Sources, the NT in general, and Paul in particular.

What we find in the letters of Paul (and Acts) is not a manual of principles of leadership or package of leadership training programme, but a creative model in practice. He was truly a *transformational* leader

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[45] There are 19 men (1 unnamed) and 10 women (2 unnamed) mentioned in Rom 16:1-16.

[46] Paul qualifies his women co-workers just as he has done with himself and his male co-workers: *prostatis, apostolos, diakonos, synergos*, etc. See R. Bieringer, "Women leadership in Romans 16," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 44 (2007) 221-237 & 316-336; Mary Ann Beavis, "I Commend to You Our Sister: Women in Romans 16:1-16," *The Bible Today* 46 (2008) 227-232, here, 232.

in so far as he transformed himself, transformed and motivated his team members and the communities as a whole. Paul was an exceptional leader of a team of collaborators belonging to a cross-section of society. He recognized their abilities and roles, gave enough room for autonomy and personal initiative.

Paul's deep-rooted spirituality made it possible for him to create space within himself to be in touch with himself, with others and with the Lord, to keep healthy distance from his work in order to be objective and impartial, yet close enough to establish a meaningful network of collaborators. He redefined leadership more in terms of '*being*' than '*doing*'. In the exercise of leadership, he discovered the necessary vision in the Gospel, and in Jesus he found its model. In this way, mission became an expression of his passion for Christ, leadership promoted inclusive partnership, personal relationship nurtured communion, theology produced Gospel-based creative responses capable of transforming societies, and authority took on the form of selfless service.

His leadership paradigm was multidimensional. Strong convictions and commitment, creativity, innovative approaches, prudence, adaptability, inclusiveness and respectful and appreciative attitudes characterized his leadership. The Church of today can surely learn much from Paul in her efforts to evolve alternative models of leadership. Leadership in the Church cannot but be an imitation of the leadership style of Christ. The one who internalized this model totally and put it into practice effectively is Paul.

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Editorial

Present day socio-political and economic situation makes a large majority of people less free or unfree to unfold themselves as humans through a complex inter-play of economic and political structures hitherto unknown in the history of humankind. Systems and structures are created by a few to dominate and control the majority to secure their freedom to become what they perceive themselves to be and to have whatever brings them power at the expense of others. Every day a few are enjoying freedom in all aspects of their life while a large majority is condemned to a new kind of slavery due to the negative effects of globalization. A few are enjoying the benefits of economic liberalization and the flow of capital beyond the borders of their nations which bring new possibilities for increasing money-power and the poorer are becoming poorer in this unjust structure created for the comfort of minority.

In spite of a strong presence of the forces of unfreedom there are signs of an increase of a strong sense of freedom to be and to become among those who are deprived of the possibility of unfolding their God-given freedom to realize their human potentialities. The uprising of the politically oppressed in some of the Arab countries and their willingness to give up their lives instead of their freedom even when the oppressive rulers of these countries are attempting to suppress them ruthlessly indicate that humans have become more aware of their right to be free to be themselves. Viktor E. Frankl in his celebrated book, *Man's Search for Meaning* says, "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number,

but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way". Not to be a victim in any circumstance of life but to be a victor is a choice in freedom that enhances the quality of human life. The forces that would create situations to enslave others are there in all societies, religions and even in the Church. But the Christian faith affirms that the Truth that sets everyone free is Jesus Christ who is freedom incarnate.

Jesus Christ reveals what humans are and what they can become. It is in responding to God in freedom humans become what they are called to become, namely, authentic humans. Jesus was not just a victim though we in our theology and liturgy sometimes give emphasis to his victimhood. He was a victor who would keep his 'last freedom' to surrender it to his Father (Mk 14:36). He was freedom incarnate in history in order to reveal to humans that by surrendering oneself to God one becomes truly free. It is the paradox of the mystery of freedom that letting oneself to be guided by the Spirit of God one experiences authentic freedom.

In his article, "Jesus means Freedom" George Therukattil reflects on the meaning of freedom from a philosophical perspective and shows convincingly that Jesus himself is freedom. Jesus whom the disciples encountered was such an authentic person. In him all dimensions of freedom, namely, personal, social and transcendental reached their highest form of actualization. The challenge is to become free like Jesus and to become authentically human. What stands in our way to become authentically free and authentically human is our false ego. In and through Jesus the goal to be attained is transcendental freedom to the point of being able to give ourselves completely to God and His children even to the point of death.

Jacob Parappally argues in his article, "Jesus: Revelation of Freedom and Its Possibilities" that the givenness of freedom belongs to the very nature of human beings as it is the dynamism that propels the

unfolding of human persons as humans. Therefore, no force can ever suppress the movement of freedom within humans. The quest for freedom, indeed, is the quest for unfolding of life. Life itself becomes what it is because of freedom. The Christian understanding of life and freedom cannot be separated from the Christian experience of God in Jesus Christ. He also attempts to show the meaning of the Christian faith-affirmation that Jesus is liberator and its implications for our understanding of the person of Jesus and freedom itself.

In his article, "Paul's Gospel of Freedom", Jose Maniparampil raises three questions: What is Paul's Gospel? What is Paul's Gospel of Freedom? What are the manifold ramifications of this Gospel of Freedom today? The author affirms that Paul's Gospel of Freedom gives enough space for theological freedom to radically interpret Jesus and the Sacred Scriptures without however falling into theological anarchy. When God is left out of the human sphere, then there is no truth, no justice and no freedom. Theology is the ideal, and a sound moral and ecclesiological life is the praxis. Paul perceived the Gospel of Christ as "Gospel of Freedom" because with the advent of Christ, humanity had reached 'adulthood' or 'maturity' and therefore it knows how to use freedom responsibly. According to the author, Paul's Gospel of freedom challenges our ecclesiological life as members of the Church and our ecological commitment to protect the environment as well as to promote justice, equality and peace.

Isaac Padinjarekuttu, sketches the development of the understanding of freedom by the Disciples of Christ and its exercise in the Christian community in his article, "Freedom of the Disciples of Jesus in History". Freedom and liberation were fundamental dimensions of the message of Jesus. The Kingdom of God offers to those who accept God as ruler freedom; freedom from enslavement to the rule of Satan, sin and death; freedom from social and religious pressures, and the enslaving needs of an imprisoned self; freedom from worry and fear; freedom to love God and one's neighbour. The Church, the community

of Jesus' disciples, should mediate the freedom brought forth by Jesus. It should witness to the liberation which he proclaimed through word and deed and subject itself to his judgment so that he continues to liberate it from all un-freedom. The freedom which Jesus brought forth must be realized, first of all, in the community he founded, namely, the Church. Only then, can it become authentic witness to true freedom and liberation and become a credible and effective champion of human freedom.

All the articles of this issue of *Jeevadhara* invite its readers to reflect on the mystery of freedom gifted to them by God and incarnated in history in the person of Jesus and challenge them to stand against all those forces who try to enslave humans whether systems or structures, religions or ideologies as Jesus did and to use their God-given freedom to unfold themselves as authentic human persons.

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Jesus Means Freedom

George Therukattil

The Jesus whom we encounter in the Gospels is the one who integrated all dimensions of freedom. The authenticity of his being and his actions flows from the deep freedom he experienced within. He actualized this freedom in his relationship with God, other humans and the world. In this article, Jesus means Freedom, the author reflects on the meaning of freedom from a philosophical perspective and shows convincingly that Jesus himself is freedom. Following the philosophical thinking of Levinas and others the author affirms that it is in the perfect exercise of freedom one realizes what one truly *is*. This is the extra, the more, in the humans, that makes them spiritual, different from merely material. So from a philosophical perspective, freedom consists in the act of *authentic existing*. Jesus whom the disciples encountered was such an authentic person. In him all dimensions of freedom, namely, personal, social and transcendental reached their highest form of actualization. The challenge is to become free like Jesus and to become authentically human. What stands on our way to become authentically free and authentically human is our false ego. In and though Jesus the goal to be attained is transcendental freedom to the point of being able to give ourselves completely to God and His children even to the point of death.

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Introduction

From time immemorial philosophers and sages of all ages and climes have been fascinated by the enigmatic nature of human freedom. And the theme of freedom has been a subject of contemplation ever since the dawn of articulation of philosophical enquiries. But even today there has never been a consensus on its real meaning but only different perceptions that still go on evolving. At its deepest level, freedom points to that which makes human beings specifically human. "A human being without freedom would not be a human person".[1] A human characteristic of such anthropological significance has profound implications for our lives as it is with freedom we transcend our circumstances and construct our personalities in relationships with ourselves, with others, and with God. Hence, the great significance and need for inquiring into an authentic meaning of freedom.

The article is an exploration and reflection on human freedom from philosophical perspective leading to a presentation of Jesus as the great Event of freedom, in so far as he realizes in his person and life a harmonious integration of all the dimensions of authentic freedom in the highest possible manner. This could challenge and move us to *transform* our freedom and thereby our lives into lives of 'freedom of the children of God'.

Philosophical Reflections on Human Freedom

Existential philosophers would say that human beings are not something else that also happens to be free; rather human beings are freedom. This is a false view of freedom. It reflects the modern rebellion against God and God's norm and direction. Those who understand freedom as the completely autonomous and radically arbitrary license to do just what they want and to have their own way are living in the dark about it, for by our very nature we are part of a created existence and contain a meaning, norm and direction. Situated within an eternal divine

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[1] J.L Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, New York, 1973.p.44

plan and human response to a higher calling within that plan human freedom is envisioned as a responsible and loving relationship with God and neighbour.[2] And becoming inwardly one with this plan, direction and norm is what freedom is all about. It is one thing to say that human beings are freedom and quite another to determine the quality of that freedom. The quality of human freedom is immersed in the physical and material structures that limit and at the same time help to release it, that both determine it and serve as the basis of its transcendence.

So, against existential philosophers we assert that our freedom is not absolute but limited and situated. Our freedom is enclosed in the finite material body which is not an appendix to our self, but an essential part of our being and a condition for our participation in the world. Constituted by this limitation, we have to fashion ourselves in freedom from the vast possibilities by going beyond and transcending the given according to the norm and direction of our human nature. Thus freedom as an inner capacity or a natural disposition to chalk out one's life and destiny, freedom gradually turns out to be 'power over' to choose one's destiny and the means to it. "One *is* free to a given extent and *becomes* free to a desired extent. Human beings are free not only to decide their life-direction, but also to decide to be free or not."[3] And this means we *become* free when we transcend the confines of our self-made walls and boundaries in our beings and attitude. We become free when we can get rid of the numerous unfreedoms we set up by reducing the space within ourselves and between persons. It is when we get rid of our own anxieties and interests of self-preservation and self-promotion, we become really free. Thus though it is freedom that dominates and elicits the dominant instinct in us, the realization that responsibility is the other side of freedom does not take too long to dawn upon us. In other words, responsibility is not an appendix to human nature but it is a part and parcel of it and even precedes freedom.

[2] Cf. Sahayadas Fernando, "Freedom" in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Vol. I, Ed. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 2010, p.552

[3] Sahayadas Fernando, *Art. cit.*, p.553

The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas is a criticism [deconstruction] of the whole of Western philosophy. Levinas accuses it as 'egology'[4]. For it is a philosophy built on the freedom of the self rather than the responsibility *by* and *for* the other. "He builds his philosophy not on *is* but on *ought* that is before *is*."[5] According to Levinas, phenomenologically it is responsibility that comes prior to freedom. Consequently it is Ethics that is first philosophy [Metaphysics]. By this Levinas gives Ethics a metaphysical basis and Metaphysics an ethical face. In the struggle or selfish attempt at being and persisting in being the vulnerable 'naked faced' of the other summons us to an ethical experience of obligation to respond to the other in need.[6] At the epiphany of the naked face of the vulnerable other, we are shocked to guilt and shame at our self-interested attempt at being and persisting in being. We realize what sort of 'social vultures' we are. Our attempt at being is a threat to the other; our self-interest is a temptation to "kill", to reduce the other to our selves. This can be the case in principle, but we experience this as *'ought not to be'*. This experience reveals to us that we are more than our free 'effort at being', we are 'otherwise-than-being'.[7] It is a disquieting and provocative revelation that I am responsible for the other, not only of a singular other, but of every other: I have a responsibility for everyone, and responding to this responsibility is a demand of justice. Humans have responsibility, which Cain pretended to be unaware of, when he asked: "Am I responsible for my brother?" The wounded other has a right to be cared for. The other summons us to our responsibility. "True freedom, the post-modern philosophers argue, is embedded in the

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[4]   George Therukaattil *Becoming Human: A Study in Philosophical Anthropology*, JIP Publications, Bangalore, 1999, p. 43

[5]   *Ibid.,* p. 50

[6]   Cf. Roger Burggraeve, *Proximity with the Other; A Multidimensional Ethic of Responsibility in Levinas*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, 2009, pp.25-74

[7]   Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, transl. A Lingis, Kluer, The Hague, 1981.

subject's exercise of responsible relationship with 'the other', who does not fall within the borders drawn by religious and political hegemony."[8]

Responsibility *by* and *for* the other thus precedes our freedom. We are obligated before we take a free decision. And so freedom can be understood as an inner ability to take responsibility to be otherwise-than-being. It can be defined in terms of human's ability to grow in our 'can-be' aspect. "What we are, we can be; if we can be what we are, then we ought to be so – the trilogy of is-can-ought![9] Our being human is not something that is statically given to us; it is given to us with a 'can-be' – with our freedom to grow in our being human. If we are given that freedom, we ought to make use of this freedom. Thus "can-be" goes with "ought-to-be". This fundamental moral responsibility or ought-character is ingrained in the 'can-be' character of every one of us.[10] Freedom is our possibility for self-transcendence, it includes as well the fundamental responsibility of ours to *become* human. We know that we are not free, if we let ourselves go by our moods, instincts and passions. As Goethe says in *Faust*, "Freedom and life are earned by those alone, who conquer them each day anew." [11]

It is only, therefore, through objective decisions and behavior, and not through whimsical acts, that human freedom can legitimately realize itself. "And even in the free choices that are open, freedom must choose freedom and not lack of freedom".[12] From this we know how much of our freedom is threatened from within and without. This is the problematic nature of human freedom. Man realizes that he is constantly threatened with falling away from the pursuit of actions, which makes him truly

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[8]   Sahayadas Fernando, *Art. cit.,* p.553

[9]   Johnson J.Puthenpurackal, "Towards a Secular Spirituality: A PhilosophicalPerspective" in *ALL BY LOVE: New Vistas in Theological Spirituality* eds. Jose Maniparambil and K Henry Jose, Tejas, Bangalore, 2011, p.183

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Goethe, *Faust* transl. W. Kaufmann, New York,1963,p.469

[12] J.Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, Philadelphia,1979, p.103

free. He is condemned to the frightening choice of using freedom for freedom or for lack of freedom. Human freedom is a burden; man has constantly to recognize and choose all the factors that foster freedom and reject those that hamper his freedom. To the extent he does this, he becomes free and grows in freedom. Man experiences this condition of *being* free only as a perpetual *becoming* free. "Freedom is the capacity," to use Nietzsche's phrase, "to become what we truly are."[13] To realize what one truly *is*, is considered to be perfect exercise of freedom. "This is the extra, the more, in the humans, that makes them spiritual, different from merely material." [14]

So, from a philosophical perspective, freedom consists in the act of *authentic existing*. Thus, when we keep on growing in our uniqueness and individuality against the constant temptation to be submerged in the irresponsible whims and fancies, passions, sensuality, when we make use of our possibilities and opportunities to grow in our humanness, when we widen our spatio-temporal horizons so as to become cosmic persons without any limiting boundaries, and when we courageously accept our finitude and choose to be what we ought to be, we show that we are not merely a material being, but free, spiritual being – someone with a *spirit-uality*. Henry Bergson calls freedom the 'vital impulse', the triumph of consciousness.[15]

Humans are self-creative by virtue of their ability of freedom. "According to Kierkegaard, I exist by constantly choosing to be myself. By the *act* of existing I keep on growing in my being human, and the ultimate act of existence is the leap of choice that one makes the humans different from the rest of creation; this specificity amounts to the 'spirituality' of the humans. What Kierkegaard failed to consider in the human beings was complemented by Gabriel Marcel, namely the question

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[13] As quoted in Rollo May, *Man's Search for Himself*, New York 1953, p.142

[14] J. Moltmann, *Op.cit.*, p.103

[15] Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, *Art.cit.*, p.185

of *inter-subjectivity*. As every human being is to be taken as a subject, the other is always a 'thou', with whom I am directly related, and thus humans are characterized by the relation of inter-subjectivity. Accordingly subjectivity is basically inter-subjectivity: one's self is constituted by relations with others. But my exigency for commitment is only partially fulfilled in human interrelationships of finite thou's that I become aware of my orientation to the Absolute Thou (God). By choosing to be committed to the finite thou-s and to the Absolute Thou, one creates oneself. Thus the humans are specially characterized by the existence of the twofold inter-subjective relation: to God in *faith*, to others in *love*." [16]

Freedom, as self-transcendence, is both a *becoming* of oneself and a widening beyond oneself. In other words, it is by going beyond oneself that one becomes oneself; hence one implies and involves the other. "Thinkers present different ways in which the human extends oneself beyond oneself. When I relate myself to others, as an *I* to *thou-s*, I am becoming myself, and when I take such a relation to and acceptance of the others as my responsibility, my subjectivity is getting enriched. Reaching out to others implies that I go beyond the boundary of my little individual self. My extending beyond myself does not stop with the finite others, rather it goes beyond to the Infinite Other. It is through the finite others that I extend myself to the Infinite Other. This process of self-transcendence – a self-transcending beyond oneself and to oneself – is the 'spirituality' of the humans."[17]

Inner freedom is a spiritual ecstasy, the state of being beyond all interests and selfishness. It is a miracle of the soul. To quote Abraham Heschel: "For integrity is the fruit of freedom. The slave will always ask: 'what will serve my interests?' It is the free man who is able to transcend the causality of interest and deed, of act and the desire for

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[16] *Ibid.,* p.186

[17] *Ibid.,* p.187

personal reward. It is the free man who asks: 'Why should I be interested in my interests? What are the values I ought to feel in need of serving? "[18] This is the miracle of freedom

Dimensions of Freedom

In the light of the reflections above we now proceed to an analysis of freedom in its various dimensions in order to have an integral and total understanding of human freedom. We human beings are fundamentally constituted by three dimensions, which are determined by three main relationships we have: the personal, the social and the transcendental. These three dimensions are interwoven and form a synthesis. Consequently our freedom adequately considered is profoundly personal, significantly social and ultimately divine. Hence the three dimensions: 1. the personal, 2. the social (interpersonal) and 3. the transcendental. Although we cannot separate them, we must nonetheless delineate and discuss them successively for the sake of clarity. [19]

Personal Freedom

Personal freedom is the freedom of the person as a subject with conscious interiority. Freedom at the personal level means the capacity to be with one's self. It means the autonomy for reflecting, choosing and directing one's life, according to one's ideal, values and goal, from one's centre of consciousness. It is one's capacity to mould and create oneself. Such freedom allows a person to decide about himself/herself as a whole and to become a personal self. Absence of freedom at this level is the incapacity to act and determine one's future. Negatively, the problem of personal freedom is one bondage, of a freedom that turns in upon itself. It is the problem of freedom's immobility or inability to seek the good beyond the self. When in freedom, we turn in on ourselves, we may claim that we have personal freedom but in fact we are slaves of our

[18] Abraham Heschel, *Man is Not Alone, A Philosophy of Religion,* Ferrar, Straus and Giroux. New York, 1976 renewed 1979, p. 142

[19] To this section, I am indebted to Roger Haight's, *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology,* Paulist Press, New Jersey, 1985. pp.179-184

own biases, social prejudices and class-advantages. Personal freedom means freedom from inauthentic existence, from ignorance, fear, anxiety, evil inclinations, bad habits, prejudices, psychic compulsions and obsessions. Positively, it is the spontaneous, self-conscious creativity of the humans to determine themselves as subjects with specific ideals and goals.

Personal Freedom comes to light in being able to free oneself from exterior constraints. Hence, we have to be self-conscious, be ourselves and master ourselves in order to be free. We are conditioned in every sense, and freedom means *de-conditioning*. This de-conditioning is at once a *freedom from* (bondages) and a *freedom to* (realize ourselves in our plenitude). There is double invitation to us; not to allow ourselves to be crushed by culture and nature, by men, society and the gods, and also not to dream of a denouement in a horizontal or vertical future that nobody will ever see, but rather to envision a trans-historical present and that neither denies the temporal nor drowns in it.

Many of us know what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, and yet opt to follow our whims and fancies because evil easily attracts and entices many to its fold. The famous analogy – where the body is compared to a chariot, the mind to the reins, the horses to the sense organs, the intellect to the driver, the traveler to the individual and the desires, pursuits etc., to the paths by which it travels – indicates the need to control the horses and steer the chariot in the right path. Wild horses are difficult to tame and so are the senses by one whose mind and intellect are not under control.

Social Freedom

On the way to *becoming* free, our profoundly personal disposition takes on inseparable social significance, as personal freedom influences and is influenced by the freedom of others. Human persons are essentially directed toward each other. Being human involves being-with-others. Our existence is a co-existence and a pro-existence. "To be free is to be free *with* and free *within*. Contingency of human freedom derives its

primordial meaning from this togetherness. Freedom of an individual comes into existence in the midst of other free beings. Concretely, the social implication of personal freedom is comprised of contingent obligations *towards* and responsibility *for* others. By carrying the social prescriptions faithfully, the individual not only realizes his or her own freedom but also enables that of others."[20]

Thus our personal freedom involves certain transcendence – going beyond our selves. In order to exist as a community we need to experience others' presence and offer ourselves in freedom to others. Human life has value when it is lived with others (*Mitsein*). The presence of the other both 'limits' and also 'enhances' my freedom. Living with others brings in 'responsibility' and 'rights'. It is through the inter-subjective existence freedom becomes a presupposition. We can sum up the basis of social freedom as: "In choosing for myself. I choose for others also; I am responsible for myself and for everyone else." It is in *presence* and *participation* that human beings come to freedom and the great value of freedom. When I 'incarnate' myself through presence and participation, I enter into *communion* with others; and this can in no way be experienced except in freedom. This experience results in the formation of the community wherein people experience *concern* and *sharing*; these too cannot be demanded, but they are to be experienced in freedom. Such an experience is possible only in the 'I –Thou' relationship of love. As Gabriel Marcel again says: If I treat the other as Thou, I treat him and apprehend him *qua* freedom…. because he is freedom, and is not only nature; I collaborate with his freedom.

Thus being and becoming one's self is related to others' freedom. This imposes on us the task of accepting the other in his or her otherness and freedom. Through such free and loving affirmation of the other, we achieve personal freedom. At the social level human freedom means the absence of social structures and oppressions that hamper personal

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[20.] Sahayadas Fernando, *Art.cit.,* pp 553-554

freedom of others to enjoy a full life and human dignity. It means creating structures that open us up to others in social relationships that promote every person's personal freedom. Social freedom therefore rejects all undue pressures, from rules, customs and unjust social structures. When our personal freedom creates, participates in and sustains the social and cultural institutions that oppress human freedom and crush people, cause suffering and push many toward untimely and unnecessary death, then we violate social freedom.[21] We have a social responsibility for our social structures. They are not products of nature or of fate, but the result of free acts of human beings. Therefore, they can be changed. Social freedom demands that we assume responsibility for creating institutions and cultural practices that foster true personal freedom

Transcendental Freedom

Finally, personal freedom attains its ultimate transcendence through social freedom in the irretraceable, everlasting, final and lofty relationship with the Ultimate. "Amidst an admirable variety of possibilities to exercise one's freedom, the greatest one is that which leads to self-realization, before oneself and before the Ultimate Reality at the end of one's sojourn on earth. Union with the Ultimate is the perfect realization of freedom. To that extent freedom is created *by* and *for* the Ultimate. Only in the light of that indescribable Ultimate Reality, does the human freedom become an illumining *given* and dynamic *disposition*."[22] This is the transcendental dimension of personal freedom. In transcendental freedom, we fulfill our longing for the Infinite. Transcendental freedom is the freedom for self-determination in the face of God's absolute demand upon a person.[23] It is the freedom to live by faith and hope in the transcendent reality. By faith, hope and love we claim a relationship with God. In other words we claim to be bound to the source of all value

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[21] Roger Haight, *Op.cit.*,p.148

[22] Sahayadas Fernando, *Art. cit.*, p.554

[23] Josef Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1970, p.96

and meaning. The fullness of the self-awareness of this relationship with God in faith, hope and love is attained in the various forms of prayer.[24]

The freedom at this level is held in bondage by sin, selfishness, egoism, and morality. The bondage is in being tied to history, to this world, to what is immediately satisfying. The bondage appears then as the inability of human freedom to surrender itself, to give or hand itself over to that which transcends the self and on which the self is absolutely dependent. Positively speaking, transcendental freedom is the freedom that comes from being in contact with God. It frees us from sin and the fear of death. When we establish contact with God, by our faith, hope and love, we are liberated from the existential anxiety of all fears, even the fear of death. In as much as faith consists in entrusting our destiny to God, it frees us from the temptation to seek security in earthly things and frees us for achieving the most perfect love possible. "Faith keeps us alive in the tomb of pain and gives us the power to see visions of tomorrow in the darkness of today. This faith frees us for hope and radical love to resist all evil powers and principalities. Whoever believes and has such faith in God already experiences resurrection into a full liberation in the midst of this life itself. Liberation begins when we are delivered from fear and are set in the free space which the resurrection opens up. "[25] Hope frees us from all fears and gives us courage in our struggle for freedom. In as much as hope liberates us from the existential anxiety and anguish, it sets us free to serve others. And genuine freedom is freedom to love. By love we give ourselves to other. It is by faith, hope and love, which are timeless, that we get freed from all that is historical and reach out for eternity.

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[24] Jose Comblin, *Being Human: A Christian Anthropology*, Burns and Oates, New York,1990, p.216

[25] George Therukattil, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Human Liberation", *Vidyajyoti, Journal of Theological Reflection,*Vol. 56, 1992, pp. 406-407

Interrelationships of the Various Dimensions of Freedom

The transcendental freedom is the most important because without this freedom from fear and selfishness, there can be no freedom in the other spheres. But social freedom comes first, because freedom from socio-economic and political dominations is the condition for the other freedoms. We must admit, however, that the betterment of living conditions on the economic, political and cultural level does not automatically produce better people. There will never be social freedom without a true freedom from fear and selfishness. Transcendental freedom comes to rescue man from his fear and selfishness. We see the extent of interdependency of the various dimensions of freedom and hence the need of integrating the three different forms of freedom.

When dealing with the transcendental dimension of freedom, we saw that the opening up of the personal freedom to transcendence releases and expands it so that a person is totally free. Unless transcendental freedom is released, personal freedom turns in on itself and becomes unfree. The connection between the transcendental freedom and personal freedom is very close. Unless we have transcendental freedom, we do not have personal freedom. Both these freedoms find their proper expression in the domain of social freedom. It is only in social freedom that the other dimensions of freedom can grow and thrive.

The interrelationship of these three dimensions of freedom shows that we will never be really free if we miss any one of them in our lives. Concentrating and focusing on anyone of them to the detriment of others would not bring real freedom. Hence, the need for proper balance and integration of personal freedom, social freedom and Transcendental freedom. Integral freedom would be experienced only by those who integrate all the three dimensions of freedom appropriately in their lives. In Stoic and certain Indian spirituality, the image of a liberated person is an impecunious philosopher or sage ensconced in contemplation reflecting and meditating on the Ultimate Reality and concerns of life in the comfortable retirements of an Ashram with no concern or sensitivity for

the plight of the poor and the structures that keep them poor. This is also true of certain Indian *sannyasins* who are bent upon a pursuit of *moksha* without reference to the misery of the poor caused by the unjust socio-economic political structures of the society. The search for mental tranquility and transcendental freedom (*mukti*) in prayer centers and Ashrams would remain shallow and would not bring them the desired result unless their personal freedom is stained by the stigma of solidarity with the poor and their struggles.

The other extreme is of 'social activists' who are completely immersed in socio-economic and political freedom of people at the expense of their personal and transcendental freedom. They too would not experience integral freedom *(mukti)* in their lives if they are not rooted in God by firm faith and sure hope and strong love and ultimately aim at their own spiritual liberation from sin as well as those of others.

Human Freedom in Theological Perspective

Philosophical reflections and analysis of human freedom above well explain the theological definition of human freedom given in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Freedom is the power rooted in reason and will to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform some deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. Human freedom... attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude." (CCC 1731)

So the way we truly become free is to choose the good. When we choose and pursue what is good, we become truly free. Authentic freedom is freedom from everything that hinders us from doing the good and developing our true selves as we live and grow with others in the community. The way that we most fully become human is to always choose God and the ways of God. When we fail to choose the good, we become slaves of evil or sin. It is in this strain St Augustine defines freedom. "True freedom is the capacity not to become slave of sin, but to feel the joy of doing the right thing and of submitting oneself in obedience to the higher law: communion with supreme truth."

St. Paul reminds the people of Galatia, "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery...You were called for freedom...Do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love." For many, freedom means the absence of rules. "In its Christian meaning freedom is precisely the contrary of all this. Freedom is service to others. Genuinely free persons are those who assert, and put in practice, their right and ability to serve the liberation of others. Freedom exists for service, and has neither meaning nor foundation apart from service (Gal 5:13-14)".[26] After having declared: "For you were called to freedom, Paul adds: "Through love become slaves to one another". Freedom is for love and service. Our ability to give ourselves away in love and service is the true measure of our freedom.

This explains what freedom is - namely, freedom in the service of good, freedom that allows itself to be led by the Spirit of God. It is attained precisely by letting oneself be led by God's spirit. The law of Christ is freedom; however, this freedom has content, direction and therefore contradicts what only apparently liberates man, but in truth what makes him a slave.

So freedom for the Christian is to choose Jesus Christ and to follow His ways. That is what freedom is. It is freedom for God for whom we have been created, freedom for good, freedom for choosing the right. It is very much a challenge to work towards a fulfillment to which our nature is ordered and to which Jesus invites us, viz., full life in the Kingdom. It is growing as full persons and becoming children of God.In Jesus, we are revealed what we truly ought to be. In terms of Jesus, in terms of the criterion that Jesus himself is, we are free and we know how to use freedom deriving from God and destined for God. "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath". "The magnitude of Jesus' claim – which is an authoritative interpretation of the Law because he himself is God's primordial Word – becomes fully apparent here. And it also becomes

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[26] *Ibid.*,p.204

apparent what sort of new freedom devolves upon man as a result – a freedom that has nothing to do with mere caprice."[27]

Jesus – Norm and Model of Integral Freedom

The New Testament presents Jesus as the great event of freedom. All that Jesus is, says, and does, manifest the truth and fullness of freedom and spells out an event of freedom.

Personal Freedom in Jesus

Jesus had tremendous personal freedom. He was a person who had the courage to say "I": "I, however say to you" manifested the boldness and freedom of his conceptions He could speak: "It is I", without guarantee from other authorities outside himself.[28] He exercised his personal freedom to think, say and do things, which were full of meaning for human beings and which in the past nobody had said or done. His freedom was alive in his imaginative explorations, stories and parables that enhance life. "In the freedom of his love, he could see new depths and meanings in things, could conceive new patterns of human relationships and envision fresh dimensions for religion."[29] Jesus proved to be most spontaneous and free in his unconventional behaviours, like Feet Washing, Table Fellowship –open and free association with sinners. Immensity of his imaginative freedom fashioned attitudes, values, morality, social customs and human relationships that transcended the conventional. "This man, Jesus, had other norms for human relations and moral rectitude."[30] He went by forgiveness and love of enemies, not revenge or tit for tat, by mercy and compassion not animal sacrifices or *poojas* and by centrality of the person not traditional laws or rituals. His

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[27] Pope Benedict XIV, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Part I , transl. Adrian J Walker, Bloomsbury, London, p.325

[28] Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, London,1980, p.91

[29] Samuel Rayan, "Jesus Had Imagination", in *Selected writings of Samuel Rayan*, vol.1 Ed. Kurian Kunnumpuram, St. Pauls, Mumbai, 2011, p. 49

[30] *Ibid.,* p.53

imaginative freedom in the sphere of religion transformed religion from bondage into liberating experience; from an oppressive burden into a joyous song.

He was interiorly and personally free, because he was unselfish and so could speak and act most freely. Jesus lived free without any dependence on anyone. He was detached from persons, places and things. Hence he was free to speak and act most freely and had no prefabricated notions of persons. He was unique and a distinct person. He was 'the man who fits no formula'.[31] His words and attitudes reveal someone freed from the complications that people and a history of sin created. His personal freedom shone especially before his adversaries; Pilate was surprised by Jesus' freedom. He thought Jesus would appeal to him. To the end Jesus exercised his personal freedom. He went to meet his martyrdom with this personal freedom "No one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own account." (Jn. 11:8)

Transcendental Freedom in Jesus

Transcendental freedom is the freedom to relate to God by faith, hope and love. Jesus' experience of this freedom is described as the freedom of God. "Thou art my Beloved Son" (Mk 1:10) Because of his great faith, hope in God and love of God, Jesus experienced God as a most loving and compassionate 'Abba', a word "properly used for one's own human father and never used in Jewish liturgical prayer of the time for God."[32] This 'Abba' experience gave him a tremendous inner freedom, taking him beyond all conventional boundaries, attracting all kinds of people to him. It also explained the unction and content of his preaching. The awareness that God is the loving parent of all is the foundation of his revolutionary agenda."[33]

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[31] Hans Kung, *On Being Christian*, New York, 1976, p.212

[32] John P Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking Historical Jesus*, 3 vol. New York, Doubleday, 1991, 1994, 2001, vol.3, p.300

[33] Subash Anand, "The Two sides of the same coin, Religion as prophetic critique and social legitimization", in *Journal of Indian Theology*, Vol. IV, no 3 September-December 2011, p.21

In Jesus we find the transcendental freedom in its fullness. We find in him complete openness and fidelity to God. Because of this, he was free of any anxiety about himself or even the future of the Kingdom. He was free from earthly securities – the only security was his faith and hope in the Father and in the guidance and power of the Spirit. This freedom moved Jesus to act in union with God's will for the Kingdom. For Jesus transcendent freedom begins with faith. To have faith is to believe in something mightier than the established world. The first victory of Jesus over the world is his faith (Jn16:33; I Jn 5:4-5) He achieved and manifested the fullness of transcendent freedom by conquering fear (Mk 14:33-36; Heb 2:14-15; 5:7-10). This is an image of freedom capable of revealing to anyone whomsoever the meaning of true freedom (Jn 12:31-32; Heb 12:1-4). Those who have overcome fear, overcomes death. Freedom is mightier than death, for it is the affirmation of life's victory over death (Jn 12:31-32; I Jn2:14).[34] By surrendering himself in faith, hope and love to God (Heb 5: 7-9) he grew in freedom until it blossomed in total freedom in his Resurrection.

The death of Jesus is a "tragedy in which freedom becomes free and realizes itself as love in a struggle within the fatal grip of destiny; a tragedy in which death and life are inseparable in the person of Jesus... a tragedy the truth of which will touch us to *katharsis* in the measure in which we are open to its movement and participate in the action."[35] And our experience of freedom of the children of God is a resurrection experience. Resurrection is integral and transcendental freedom. "It is made visible by God who sends into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, the Resurrection Spirit (Jn 7:37-39; 19:33-35;20: 19-23; Rom 8:11). It is this Spirit that cries from our depths, Abba, Father, and educates us to pray and live as God's children (Gal 4:4-7); (Rom 8:26-27; Gal 5:16-26)."[36]

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[34] Jose Comblin, *Op. cit.,*pp 204-205

[35] Samuel Rayan, "Jesus Today: Steadfastness of Love and Life" *Jeevadhara,* Vol. XXVI, (1996), p.156

[36] *Ibid.*, PP 157-158

Jesus is the wheat grain that falls and dies in order to release the immense possibilities that had lain dormant within it. As Gerald O'Collins says: "In being raised from the dead Jesus was liberated to enter into a web of relationships with the universe of men (and woman) and things."[37] Resurrection is the "liberating lure" and "whole-making magnetism". Jesus is the woman in travail bringing forth the whole human race to a new life of freedom of the children of God.

Social Freedom in Jesus

The transcendental freedom of Jesus permeated into the level and realm of social freedom to work for the change of societal systems that dehumanized and oppressed human beings and to establish graced structures and institutions that promoted equality, justice and freedom. "Jesus' intervention on behalf of life and human rights was radical. He sided with the poor, loved the unloved and those deemed unlovable. He made solidarity with the outcaste, the oppressed, and victims of history's slavery and untouchability systems of colonial plunder, accumulation on a world scale, globalization and greed."[38]

Jesus carried his liberative struggles into the religious structures and domains as well. He was no slave of any established order, but tried to discover and fulfill God's will. He was free of the slavery of law and rituals that dehumanized and oppressed human beings. This explains his freedom with regard to the Sabbath and other prescriptions of the law, which were not for man's liberation. He felt free to break the law in order to save, heal, and help human beings. His message was to free people from religious leaders who had enslaved them with unbearable pack of precepts, purity laws and customs, complicated, sacrificial and ritual prescriptions that were obstacles to human freedom and love. He

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[37] Gerald O'Collins, *What are they saying about Resurrection*, Paulist Press, New York, 1978, p.77

[38] Samuel Rayan, *Op.cit.,* p. 241

challenged the social and cultural structures, which gave precedence to laws, rituals or things over persons.[39]

Jesus denounced the political exploitation and oppression of the poor. He came down upon the external domination by Rome and the internal domination by a wealthy landowning class and an influential religious elite. Though he avoided a direct confrontation with Rome, he did attack the system and countered "the Roman claims by affirming God's universal fatherhood and love, the equality and brotherhood of all men and women, freedom for everybody to be free of impositions and dominations."[40] He was not indifferent to the questions of justice, human rights and freedom implied in the political. "Jesus was not insensitive to the political dimension of life, especially as it affected the poor. As the foreign regime ruled in large measure through the Temple, the priests and the Council, and through the rich, Jesus' criticism of mammon and Temple were sharp political statements, and part of the people's anti-imperialist struggle. Hints as to Jesus' political stance are in his depiction of Galilee's ruler Herod as a fox (Lk 13:31-33), and in his refusal to pay the temple tax by humorously referring tax-men to fish-mouth as his purse or bank (Mt 17: 24-27)."[41] He was with the people in their battles against inhumanity of life by the cultural, politico-economic structures of the time; he announced and provoked a revolution in those dehumanizing structures. "He wanted all discriminations and marginalization abolished, all prisons opened and captives set free. He wanted everybody, the poor, the working class, the outcasts, the little people and women, all to have dignity and social acceptance, a share in the wealth of the country and a place in its history.".[42] He radically questioned every level of the political, social, economic, cultural and religious. "Jesus told the people stories of how amassed and unshared wealth erodes head and heart and

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[39] Leonardo. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for our Time*, London, 1980. pp.91-92

[40] Samuel Rayan, *Op. cit.,* p. 304

[41] *Ibid.,* p.244

[42] *Ibid.,* p.302

dehumanizes, depersonalizes people (Lk 12:13-21; 16:19-31). He therefore asks the rich to 'go and sell everything, give the money to the poor' and then join him in his struggle for a different world (Mk 10:17-21). He persuades friends to give up greed, make amends for injustice and share resources with the poor. And when they do it, he invites them to appreciate the human wholeness that has come to them (Lk 19:1-10)."[43] All this was part of his attack of the legal mentality of the Pharisees and scribes who legitimized their privileges and thus oppressed the poor and the powerless. His whole public ministry - his concern for the poor and down-trodden, for women, for the outcasts, his exhortation to the rich to share their wealth, his criticism of those in power, his way of countering domination with humble service and childlike, trustful relationships (Lk 22: 24-27; 9: 46-48; Mk 9:33-37) - all this was directed to the social freedom of the people.

By and large the Gospels were an account of Jesus' confrontation with the structures and agents of domination, the scribes and the Pharisees and their legal system of oppression, political powers and their cruel imperialism. Controversies that Jesus provoked by the defiance of the religious and traditional laws, his direct confrontation with the Temple authorities, his attack on the economic and social abuses of his day and his calling in question the power of the ruling classes - were all aimed at the social freedom of the people. For Jesus each person is valid center of freedom and creativity – a center open to other centers of freedom organized into a communion of equals – a Kingdom of peace, justice and brotherhood. "God's reign is the power of love, compassion, and forgiveness, of humble service of one another, of equality and freedom of all, of joyful work, sharing of God's earth and uninhibited celebration of life."[44] What Jesus wanted was true, integral freedom for the people, freedom in all its dimensions, the personal, the social and the transcendental and that too at a much deeper, radical and qualitatively different level.

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[43] *Ibid.,* P.242

[44] *Ibid.,* p.312

Thus Jesus' struggles, his radicalism in re-interpreting religion and its laws, in fact, the essence of his ministry was that it was a ministry of integral freedom for all. It was his way of living the integral freedom in his person in the highest manner.

Conclusion

Reflection on freedom and Meditation on Jesus' integral freedom has kept us looking at the great value and dynamism of freedom. Freedom summons us to go beyond ourselves, bids us deny the powerful tendency to seek our own self and selfish interests. When we live our life fully by denying ourselves and finally dying to ourselves, the Divine in us, the Spirit is released and our life becomes one of integral and transcendental freedom. An obsession with self-importance enslaves us. So we are never free. Our attention, energy are employed in looking after ourselves in one way or another.

The greatest freedom is to get released from the tyranny of the ego. For this, we have to "unself", we have to make a free decision against ego, against our selfishness. Because our senses, appetites, passions, emotions have their actions and have a life of their own and must be controlled and curbed. It is really the will – the faculty of choosing that is involved. Eye sees, ear h ears automatically, passions are aroused automatically, but it is the will that must choose to turn the eyes, refuse to listen, control instincts. We have to keep our freedom disciplined and directed to the good and bring it back when it has strayed. Everything will depend on what we really want, what we hold to be our true good. To the extent we love and identify with goodness, we are free. We find ourselves by losing ourselves, letting ourselves go out in love. Only the unselfish heart knows pure freedom. The goal to be attained is transcendental freedom to the point of being able to give ourselves completely to God and His children even to the point of death.

But if we want transcendental freedom we have to relate to God in faith, hope and love. To believe in God and centre our lives in faith and hope in God is to come out of our selves, to receive freedom and new

life from God.[45] "The basic reality of our life is that we are born towards the Other, towards God our centre does not lie in ourselves but outside us, in God… So basically it is by ex-centric movements of faith, hope and love that we make God the centre of our lives and realize our true self."[46] We have to remove ourselves from the center, see ourselves as member of a community, which we must serve even to the point of death. [God brings us into community precisely in order to purify us and give us freedom.] Such a choice of freedom leads us to forget the ego, to lose sight of it and calls for firm faith and hope in and love of God and His children. Each of us is utterly important to God, so we can afford to relax a bit and let Him look after our little selves. This is faith. We think unless we take care of us, nobody will. But faith tells us that there is One who never takes his eyes off us – so much so not a hair of ours is lost. By such faith, hope and love we relate to God and attain the transcendental freedom – the freedom of the children of God in His Kingdom.

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[45] George Therukaattil, *Art. cit.,* p. 408
[46] George Therukaattil, *Art. cit.,* p.406

Jesus: Revelation of Freedom and Its Possibilities

Jacob Parappally

The givenness of freedom belongs to the very nature of human beings as it is the dynamism that propels the unfolding of human persons as humans. Therefore no force can ever suppress the movement of freedom within humans. The quest for freedom, indeed, is the quest for unfolding of life. Its dynamism is its life. Life itself becomes what it is because of freedom. The Christian understanding of life and freedom cannot be separated from the Christian experience of God in Jesus Christ. In this article the author attempts to articulate the relationship between the quest for freedom and the Christian experience of freedom in and through the person of Jesus Christ. He also tries to show the meaning of the Christian faith-affirmation that Jesus as liberator and its implications for our understanding of the person of Jesus and freedom itself.

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Introduction

The mystery of freedom defies all definitions. Like life and love it is a mystery to be lived and experienced. It is obvious that it transcends all forms of articulations; be it philosophical , theological, poetic, legal or social. This fact alone reaffirms the poverty of human language and the limitations of human mind to give full expression to an experience as

fundamental as freedom. It eludes human attempts to capture and anlyse it. Freedom is a mystery in which human beings are involved, a mystery like life itself. It cannot be objectified. Karl Rahner points out this mysterious dimension of freedom when he speaks about grace in freedom. He says: "Freedom is first of all 'freedom of being'. It is not merely a quality of an act such as it is sometimes performed, but a transcendental qualification of being human".[1] If freedom itself is recognized as a *sine qua non* for the authentic unfolding of human person and if the concept of freedom itself is so free that it eludes human endeavours to define it (*defenire* means to mark limits), are there other sources that reveal this mystery so that it can be lived to maximum possibility of humans? If freedom makes humans truly humans it cannot be hidden. It needs to be revealed. It needs to be given. Christian faith affirms that it is a call to grow as humans in relation to others and make the history of the world a history of God in the world.

The givenness of freedom belongs to the very nature of human beings as it is the dynamism that propels the unfolding of human persons as humans. Therefore no force can ever suppress the movement of freedom within humans although freedom movements of people to regain their rights to exercise their freedom can be ruthlessly crushed by the powers that be. The quest for freedom, indeed, is the quest for unfolding of life. Its dynamism is its life. Life itself becomes what it is because of freedom.

The Christian understanding of life and freedom cannot be separated from the Christian experience of God in Jesus Christ. In the following pages an attempt is made to understand the relationship between the quest for freedom and the Christian experience of freedom in and through the person of Jesus Christ. We would like to look into the meaning of the Christian faith-affirmation that Jesus as liberator and the implications of this faith affirmation in our understanding of the person of Jesus and freedom itself. Therefore, an attempt is made to sketch a short history of Jesus' own freedom, its source and its stages of development and its consequences. In deed, the experience of Jesus as freedom incarnate is the pre-understanding of the faith-affirmation that Jesus is liberator or

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[1]   K.Rahner, *Grace in Freedom*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1969, p.211

savior. The Christian confession that Jesus is fully human is at the same time an affirmation that he was the full actualization of freedom hitherto unknown in history.

Jesus Christ as Freedom Encountered

The early Christian community encountered the Risen Christ as freedom personified. Union with him was experienced as freedom from all enslavement, especially, the enslavement from sin, Sin is understood as alienation of humans from themselves, God, others and nature. According to biblical revelation it is sin that makes humans inauthentic and, therefore, unfree. If sin is alienation and consequent disintegration, in Jesus Christ the believer encounters full integration of his or her life. The Johannine and Pauline understanding of Christian freedom, the *Libertas Christiana,* as the Fathers of the Church would call it, it is the participation of the believer in the Freedom of the Son.

One of the early Christian communities' experience of Jesus as the Truth that sets everyone free would give an insight into the understanding of Jesus as freedom. The community was the Johannine community. The community's unique insight into the mystery of freedom is expressed in Jesus' dialogue with the Jews. "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (John 8:31-32), and "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8: 36). Freedom is a gift. For the believer Jesus is the source of true freedom which makes a person transparent before truth and before all its manifestations whether in oneself, in others or in nature. It is spontaneously accepted and creatively expressed in his or her personal history which is made up of an integral relationship with all that is revealed to make humans authentically human.

For John, the truth or *aletheia,* that sets humans free , is not the Aristotelian concept of intellectual truth, i.e., mind's conformity to reality, but the revelation of the Ultimate Reality in Jesus Christ. John concludes his first letter with the affirmation that Jesus is truth whom both the Father and the Spirit reveal and testify (I John5:6-12). He says: "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us the understanding, to know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is true God and eternal life" (I John 5:20). So the truth that makes humans free is the freedom of the Son of God.

Piet Fransen says: "Our freedom never becomes ours alone, as grace never does. Our freedom, therefore, says St. John, is the freedom of the Son, the Son of God because by grace we partake in the obedience and love of the Son for his Father through inspiring action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is the Son who 'who sets us free' according to His own truth."[2] The life-line of this freedom is love that "casts out fear" (I John 4:18) because fear destroys freedom, incapacitates love, curtails creativity and prevents growth. Therefore, the exhortation of the Truth that sets us free is "Fear not". For fear destroys not only freedom but the unfolding of human persons. Therefore, it prevents the glory of God shining through humans.

In the Pauline theology true freedom, God himself, becoming human is to set free humans in Christ that they may live the glorious liberty of the children of God. Johannine and Pauline articulation of the early Church's experience of Jesus as freedom has tremendous consequences for the Church's mission of liberation. Commenting on the NT witness of John and Paul on the Christian experience of liberation Ignacio Ellacuria says:

> John and Paul amplify the concept of liberation greatly, stressing the goal towards which it leads. That goal is the freedom of the Children of John and Paul amplify the concept of liberation greatly, stressing the goal towards which it leads. That goal is the freedom of the Children of God in the fellowship of all human beings, who are brought together in and by one salvation process that is operative in history. They also stress the central place of the whole Christ, the creating Logos and the Redeemer in the flesh, as the root source and principle of liberty; and the need for complete liberation from sin so that the glory of God may shine resplendently in those who have been justified by faith....Liberation is absolutely essential to the Gospel message.Today, more than ever before, it is essential to the mission of the Church as well.[3]

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[2] P. Fransen, "Grace and Freedom" in *Freedom and Man,* John Courtney Murray (ed), New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons, 1965, p. 36

[3] I.Ellacuria, *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church,* New York Orbis Books, 1976, pp.102-103:

The early communities experienced an existential transformation of their lives from unfreedom to freedom through their faith in Jesus Christ. If faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ is 'existence *in* freedom' as Schubert Ogden affirms[4], can we say that Jesus' own faith in his Father is his existence in freedom? If Jesus is the truth that sets humans free can we rightly conclude that this truth is faith itself, i.e, being totally grounded in the ultimate Other? The NT presents Jesus as the one who was so totally free that he could make others free. His own way of life and ministry reveals that he experienced freedom to its fullest degree, in a way hitherto unparalleled in history. What was the source of such freedom? What are its consequences?

Jesus' Freedom and Its Source

In the biblical understanding, authentic freedom flows from one's intimate relationship with God. It empowers humans to have right relationship with other humans and the world. Hence, unfreedom is understood as a consequence of sin. Another term used to explain one's intimate relationship with God is faith. The Old Testament understood *emet* as 'leaning on' Yahweh as the support of one's existence. Indeed, faith constitutes the total existence of a person before God. The New Testament testimony about Jesus' own faith is his complete trust in the Father as the source of his existence and mission. If faith is understood as being rooted and grounded in God or 'as an existence in utter trust in God's love and utter loyalty to his cause'[5] Jesus' freedom was the expression of his faith. This faith historically lived by Jesus made the early Christian community proclaim that he is the truth that makes humans free. He is truth because it is in his faithfulness, in his *emet* that he reveals who God is and what humans can become. Therefore, freedom, faith and truth are not three abstract concepts in relation to Jesus but concrete life and historical actions of Jesus to liberate humans. It is the way he empowers humans to become what they are called to become in a God-given pattern of humanization. Therefore, rootedness in his Father

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[4]   S.M.Ogden,*Faith andFreedom:TowardsaTheologyof Liberation,*Nashville:Abingdon, 1979, p.86

[5]   Ibid., p.55

and commitment to the cause of his Father defines Jesus' faith and explains his freedom.

Jesus rootedness in his Father is total and it is the source of his total freedom. This freedom is constitutive of his faith in his Father. Hans Urs von Balthasar commenting on the faith of Jesus says: "Son of Man offers total fidelity to the Father. It is given once and for all, yet fleshed out anew at every moment in time. He shows absolute preference for the Father – Father's nature, will and commands – over his own desires and inclinations He sticks to it come what may. Above all, he lets the Father arrange and direct everything."[6] This is, indeed, the total expression of Jesus' faith as well as his freedom. Jesus' faith and freedom can be understood, therefore, only in his intimate and unique relationship to his Father whom he addressed tenderly and yet confidently as *abba*.

The classical NT text which expresses both Jesus' faith and his freedom is Mark 14:36. "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee, remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, what thou wilt". His freedom wells up from an intimate relationship with his Father which is expressed in the way he addresses his Father as *abba* . This way of addressing God is disrespectful for the Jewish mind and therefore, not used in Jewish prayers. Jesus did it with spontaneity and freedom that the NT writers preserved this term without translating it to show the originality of this way of relating to God. Joachim Jeremias who made an important study on the use of the term *abba* by Jesus affirms: "For Jesus to venture to take this step was something new and unheard of. He spoke to God like a child to its father, simply, inwardly, confidently. Jesus' use of *abba* in addressing God reveals the heart of his relationship with God."[7] Jesus' abba-consciousness revealed in his too familiar and scandalously intimate of way of addressing God with the freedom of a child, gives and insight into his own self-awareness. He was *himself* before his Father, in the total nakedness of his being, clothed only in the awareness that he was loved to the maximum of love and trusted to the fullness of trust.

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[6] H. Urs von Balthasar, *Word and Redemption: Essays in Theology II,* New York: Herder and Herder, 1964, cited by Jon Sobrino, *Christology at Crossroads,* London: SCM Press, 1978, p.86

[7] J.Jeremias, *The Prayer of Jesus*, London: SCM Press, 1967, p.62.

J.D.G. Dunn, commenting on Jesus' religious experience of God as Father, says, "The fact that Jesus used *abba* in addressing God enables us to say with some confidence that Jesus experienced God as Father in a very personal intimate way..."[8] Implied in this way of addressing God in his habitual prayer with such spontaneity and openness is a special relationship with his Father. This unique and intimate relationship was the source of his freedom. If freedom is the unlimited openness and transparency before God, the source and the end of one's being, and consequent unconditional surrender to God, Jesus was totally free. If freedom is the capacity of a human person to unfold himself or herself to the maximum possibility of being human, Jesus was fully human. The NT presents Jesus as the one who was so free and so human that those who believed in him experienced true freedom and wholeness and they could be themselves in his presence. Jesus was not only freedom incarnate but as a human, he experienced freedom to its fullness and lived a life of dangerous freedom.

History of Jesus' Freedom and His Historical Freedom

Jesus' life was a continuous enfleshment of his faith in freedom. His faith and the exercise of his freedom cannot be limited to his intimate relationship with his Father alone. Equally important is his relationship to the Kingdom of his Father and his commitment to the realization of Kingdom in the concrete situation of his life. It means that his freedom grows in his dynamic relationship with his Father and in his liberating activity as the Kingdom he proclaimed. According to Sebastian Kappen, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus announces that God will come to eradicate whatever prevents humans to become fully humans and affirm and fulfil whatever is truly human. "The Kingdom of God, therefore is, on the one hand, liberation of man from every alienation, i.e., from everything that renders him other than what he ought to be, and on the other, the full flowering of the human on our planet. In other words, it is not only freedom *from* but also freedom *for* – freedom for creativity, community and love."[9] Jesus' mission of freeing people from all types of

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[8]   J.D.G.Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, II Edition, London: SCM Press, 1993, p.187

[9]   S. Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom,* New York: Orbis Books, 1977, p. 56

alienation and securing meaning for their lives by their free response to God in and through the human community and the world. It sprang from his abba-consciousness and his commitment to the Kingdom which he preached come what may.

If Jesus' faith and freedom are the two dimensions of his intimate relationship with his Father, what Jon Sobrino considers important for the history of Jesus' faith can be applied also to his freedom. According to Sobrino, every positive human action in history is guided by some values which need to be concretized in actual life which may lead to conflict. In the conflicting situation of the dialectic interplay between the values one believes in and the negative forces that oppose the values, reality is fashioned as well as the agent who transforms the reality is also transformed. At the final stage of this positive human action or in the final stage of faith in a conflicting situation one decides to give up the values or give up life. The history of Jesus' faith culminated in his surrender in freedom to the will of the Father offering to give up life rather than the values he believed in. This is also the history of Jesus' freedom.

Jesus' spontaneous relation with his Father, his consciousness of being rooted in the Ground of being, was the source of his knowledge and conviction that true freedom made humans truly humans. It means that humans have to experience that infinite love of God, actualize what one ought to do and search for what is good, true and beautiful. It is true freedom when humans recognize the sovereignty of God's love and actualize the values of justice, love, equality, peace, forgiveness, and fellowship. Jesus called this the 'Kingdom of God', or God's reign. In his freedom Jesus also recognized the source of unfreedom. Unfreedom begins with vulnerability of freedom itself. Though called to become free by following what makes humans truly human, the tendency to become unfree by everything that makes them inhuman looms large on the horizon of the human's pilgrimage to freedom. In spite of the desire to do good humans sometimes do evil and become unfree (Rom 7:15). They feel not only alienated from themselves and others but also from the very Ground of their being. This is sin that kills freedom. Compounded by the oppressive interpretation of social, cultural, and religious laws and regulations the guilt of sin committed deepens and indeed leads to a slow

death of what makes humans authentically human, namely, freedom. There is no self-emancipation. Humans need to be gifted with the forgiving and reconciling love of God. In the warmth of God's forgiving love humans become truly humans and free. Therefore, 'the gospel within the gospel' which Jesus proclaims is the forgiving love of the Father (Lk 15).

In the history of Jesus' own freedom one can detect the strength of conviction with which he pulls down the Jewish religion's concept of God that prevents humans from experiencing the forgiving love of God. The God of Jewish religion is only interested in law, temple and status quo. Therefore, the Sabbath is more important than human being. For this God, ritual purity plays an important role in human relationship with him that one must guard against anything impure which is polluting, whether persons or things. Bound by the letter of the law, religion interprets the will of God in terms of what is forbidden and what is permitted. Thus, God of religion becomes a stern law-enforcing authority whom humans must fear. Where there is fear, there is no freedom. Thus he is not a liberating God but an enslaving god. E. Kaesemann has rightly pointed out, "There is no God who ceases to be a creator, and who can therefore, be played of against what has been created: there is no such God-pleasing religion that absolves us from everyday duties; and there is no Holy Scripture that allows man to sin and relieves us of our absolute responsibility towards our neighbor. For this reason, the commandments about Sabbath and purification are understood in a foolish way if they may be broken only in case danger to life, and love to be discarded." [10]

It was Jesus' 'royal freedom' that he rejected such an enslaving interpretation of the revelation of God because the creator who can be manipulated against the creature is a false god, a false god who robs people of their freedom and humanity.[11] Already by the human acts that go against one's own growth one experiences the bondage of sin. This tragic enslavement to sin is further worsened by the false interpretation of the laws whether social moral or cultic. Jesus insists on the primacy of love both divine and human before all types of laws, no matter how

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[10]   E.Kaesemann, *Jesus Means Freedom: A Polemical Survey of the New Testament,* London: SCM Press, 1969, p. 25

[11]   Ibid., p. 26

cultically important and traditionally followed. His proclamation of the forgiving love of God cuts the roots of sin. With an authority unknown to his predecessors, with a freedom that scandalized even his disciples he revealed that his Father's love touches the hearts of humans and liberates them from the shackles of sin. Those who are open to this forgiving love experience true freedom because authentic love liberates. The sinners, real or so called because they are social outcasts, ritually impure, physically or psychologically afflicted and economically poor, could experience healing and re-integration into society when they repented and encountered divine forgiveness through Jesus. It convinced Jesus that he was sent to " proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed' (Lk 4:18) and that he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2:17b).

At the first stage in the history of Jesus' freedom we can see how he shared the liberating love of God to an extent that was even found blasphemous by his contemporaries. In the light of the liberating love of God for whom humans were infinitely more important that the religious and social structures and systems which claimed to fulfil the will of God yet oppressed humans, Jesus stood for love, justice , equality, peace, reconciliation and fellowship whatever be the consequences.

The freedom with which Jesus reached out to anyone who sought to experience God's forgiving love and freedom brought Jesus to a situation of conflict with the powers that opposed the realization of God's liberating love in a situation of sin. Like his faith, the situation of conflict made Jesus' freedom a dangerous freedom because he was exercising it in the concrete situation which sought to destroy the liberal and the liberator in him. Hence the exercise of his freedom assumed meaning by the concretization of the values of the Kingdom which he proclaimed. By this actualization of the values of the Kingdom the history of Jesus' freedom entered into its second stage.

Jesus' freedom finds dangerous expression in his denunciation of not only the religious structures but also the social power structure which oppressed humans in the name of God, social and economic order and national security. If love is the soul of freedom, justice and fellowship form its body. Love must be expressed in freedom to love all. However,

this universal love must be translated into concrete forms. "In Jesus' case his universal love was translated into a decision to be 'with' the oppressed and to be 'against' the oppressors, precisely so that his love could be 'for' all of them."[12]

Jesus associated freely with the poor and the outcasts. He shocked the Scribes and the Pharisees when he broke social and religious barriers and had table-fellowship with the tax-collectors and so called other sinners that they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?" (Mk 2:16). Sebastian Kappen says, " No less revolutionary than Jesus' table-fellowship with publicans and sinners was his rejection of the social taboos surrounding relations between the sexes. Nothing, perhaps, was more shocking for his contemporaries than the freedom with which he associated himself with women, considering the inferior position of women in the Jewish society."[13] Freedom cannot but break those artificially created barriers of social discrimination because they are structures of inhumanity and unfreedom.

The poor in Jesus' time were socially marginalized as well as economically oppressed. Jesus believed that the poor are poor because they happened to be a part of an unjust social structure where the power is wielded by a few who kept the poor in abject misery. He was also convinced that fight against injustice was the way to bring about the Kingdom of God. "He condemns wealth that makes people poor and praises poverty that points an accusing finger at the malignant reality of wealth."[14] He condemns wealth because it produces poverty and creates classes of the oppressors and the oppressed. Above all, it undermines the sovereignty of God when mammon becomes the master of one's life (Lk 16:13). "The Pharisees who loved money heard all this and scoffed at him." (Lk 16:14). Such outright condemnation of the values of society lands him in conflict with the powers that be.

With prophetic freedom and courage he denounces the religious and the social power structures because they deny the poor the possibility to lead a life worthy of their human vocation. The cleansing of the

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[12] J.Sobrino, *Christology at Crossroads,* London: SCM Press, 1978, p.125

[13] S.Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom,* p.103.

[14] I.Ellacuria, *Freedom made Flesh,* p.33

temple (Mk 11:28) is, perhaps, the best expression of Jesus' freedom as well as of everything that Jesus stood for and stood against. He stood for a cleansed temple where one can enter into communion with God in spirit and in truth, where God's forgiving love can be experienced not through elaborate rituals prescribed by man-made traditions but through loving table-fellowship. He stood against everything that is symbolized by the desecrated temple because it was the expression of the unholy alliance between oppressive religious, social and economic power structures. Jesus turns the tables of economic exploitation over as they create, divide and separate humans into classes and groups preventing genuine table-fellowship. "In all likelihood the cleansing of the temple was the immediate provocation that led to Jesus' arrest and trial before Sanhedrin."[15]

The situation in which Jesus' true freedom faced conflicts with those forces of unfreedom leads him to the third or final stage of the history of his freedom. At this stage of freedom Jesus had to make a choice between all that he stood for or his own life. The garden of Gethsemane provided the back-drop of this struggle towards the final leap of his freedom. His glorious freedom faces its own vulnerability. He is so greatly distressed and troubled that he told his disciples that his soul was sorrowful unto death (Mk 14:33-36; Matt 26:37-38). In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus faces the greatest crisis of his life. He is tempted. The painful struggle is either to use power or to rely on authority. Power has no authority and authority has no power.. Power as received from external sources can make one inhuman and unfree. The use of power which could dominate and control others and manipulate situations for his own advantage might save his life but would kill his freedom and all what he stood for. Jesus has authority but no power. He doesn't need power that would destroy his freedom. But the temptation to preserve one's life before the impending threat to life is natural and strong. His authority which came from his intimate relation with his Father seemed to be powerless to stop the powers that were determined to destroy him. His freedom faces supreme trial. Luke presents the gravity of this situation and the excruciating pain he suffers in deciding whether to give

[15] S.Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom,* p. 115

up the values of the Kingdom he embodied or to give up his life by narrating that ' being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground (Lk 22:44). Finally, Jesus decides in his freedom for freedom. He lets the Father himself, take control also of the rest of his history. His supreme freedom is expressed in his prayer, " Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt"(Mk 14:36). Authority triumphs over power. True freedom overcomes the temptations of false freedom and its various expressions which may appear to be normal and reasonable. Letting go when the future is bleak reveals the strength of faith and the depth of authentic freedom.

The cross of Jesus is the concretization of his specific surrender to his Father in freedom which he had already made in the garden of Gethsemane. The cross of Jesus is a process which began at the incarnation when God's freedom was enfleshed in a situation of unfreedom which seeks to destroy that freedom. In this process the garden of Gethsemane symbolizes the highest peak of freedom as well as the lowest depth of frustration, confusion, fear, intolerable pain and agony. Therefore, the agony on the cross seems to lose its intensity in comparison with the agony in the garden where Jesus' freedom faced its ultimate trial.

If the cross is the consequence of Jesus' dangerous freedom, the resurrection reveals that God's freedom ultimately triumphs and can overcome whatever be the power of unfreedom. At his resurrection Jesus' freedom reaches its fullness, and thus he becomes the source of the Spirit of freedom to those who encounter him. Therefore, Paul affirms, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (II Cor 3:17). Indeed, the Jesus of history was encountered as freedom enfleshed by his disciples. Now the risen Lord, he is encountered as the one who effects a radical transformation of their lives through his Spirit so that they realize themselves as authentically human and free. This experience of freedom makes them agents of freedom for others because they recognize their freedom as a gift and a task. In their own personal history the disciples realized that they could become more and more liberated to the extent that they set others free by continuing the mission of the Truth that sets everyone free.

Conclusion

Freedom that defies all definitions found its historical expression and trans-historical realization in Jesus Christ. The early Christian community encountered him in history as one who lived freedom to its fullness and continued to liberate others to experience same freedom even after his death. They knew that he was crucified for living out his freedom dangerously in a situation that opposed his freedom. The powers of unfreedom found him inconvenient and threatening as he stood against their religious, social and economic systems and structures that made them victims of unfreedom and condemned the majority to dehumanization. The source of Jesus' freedom was his intimate union with his Father whom he called *abba* with the spontaneity of a child. This intimate relationship as also the source of his mission of liberation. He proclaimed with authority and clarity that humans would experience authentic freedom if they would encounter the forgiving love of God and live by the values of the Kingdom. With a freedom that was shocking to his hearers he interpreted religious laws, broken down social barriers and violated dehumanizing regulations and denounced oppression and the exploitation of the poor and the marginalized. Kaesemann says: "Whatever else Jesus may have been, he was a 'liberal'....He was a liberal because in the name of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit he interpreted and appraised Moses, the Scriptures, and dogmatics from the point of view of love, and thereby allowed devout people to remain human and even reasonable."[16] But Jesus had to pay heavily for his life and expression of authentic freedom. Gethsemane symbolizes the ultimate trial of freedom and there in the garden, true to his freedom, he decided to give up life rather than the values he believed in and practiced dangerously.

So irrepressible was the freedom that was made manifest in Jesus that the powers that were opposed to Jesus could only destroy his earthly life but not his freedom. The liberator continues to live challenging the structures of unfreedom as before through his Spirit who is present in all those who encounter him and commit themselves to his cause of liberation.

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[16] E. Kaesemann, *Jesus means Freedom,* p. 27

Paul's Gospel of Freedom

Jose Maniparampil

The author raises three questions: What is Paul's Gospel? What is Paul's Gospel of Freedom? What are the manifold ramifications of this Gospel of Freedom today? The author affirms that Paul's Gospel of Freedom gives enough space for theological freedom to radically interpret Jesus and the Sacred Scriptures without however falling into theological anarchy. When God is pushed to the backburner, then there is no truth, no justice and there is total bondage. Theology is the ideal, and a sound moral and ecclesiological life is the praxis. Paul perceived the Gospel of Christ as "Gospel of Freedom" because with the advent of Christ, humanity had reached 'adulthood' or 'maturity' and therefore it knows how to use freedom responsibly.

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Introduction

Arbeit macht Frei. It is this German phrase that welcomed me at the entrance of Oranienburg Nazi Concentration Camp in Germany. It is this same slogan that is found at the arch-gate of the most infamous Auschwitz I in Poland. The German expression *Arbeit macht Frei* means "Work makes you free" or "Work sets you free." Work liberates! Hitler mesmerized the people with this catchphrase and attracted them in huge

numbers to these camps. And what happened? Ironically and very tragically, people were brutally coerced working to exhaustion with the result they lost all freedoms, even freedom to exist on earth. Over six million people lost their lives in these gas chambers! See, how work made them free! This is an example how a noble concept like "freedom" can be distorted and misused cruelly.

On the one hand, the quest for freedom and the aspiration to liberation 'defines' the character of the modern world. All want to be free! All want to be liberated! On the other hand, "freedom" and "love" are the most abused or misunderstood words today. It is not without reason that one of the most misinterpreted Pauline theses is his view of "law-free" Christian community. He wrote boldly, "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). He corroborated it when he repeated the same through statements like, "the freedom we have in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:4-5) and "you were called to freedom" (Gal 5:13). Joseph Fitzmyer described the phrase "the freedom we have in Jesus Christ" as the *Magna Carta* of Galatians.[1] In the Letter to the Romans, which is known as the "Thesis of Paul," he writes about "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). In the Second Letter to the Corinthians Paul's words are forceful when he writes, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). In short, all the major letters of Paul contain the notion of freedom.

As Martin Luther King Junior said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed," and this calls for an eternal vigilance from the part of the subjects of a country or members of an organized religion if they should not see perpetuation of slavery. In this article, our attempt is to get a grip on Pauline concept of freedom. What is at the core of Paul's Gospel of Freedom? What are its implications in the praxis of the Church and the world? These questions gain importance in a context where we have only pretensions of freedom both within and without. We shall have three foci in this article: What is Paul's Gospel? What is Paul's Gospel of Freedom? What are the manifold ramifications of this Gospel of Freedom today?

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[1] Joseph Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Galatians," *NJBC*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown *et. al.*, Bangalore, TPI, 1990, 781.

I. Paul's Gospel

In the Galatian Correspondence, Paul writes that he is shocked at the fickleness of the Galatians that they so quickly turned away from "the Gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:7). Paul had preached to the Galatians *the Gospel of Christ*. The Greek phrase for "the gospel of Christ" is *ho evangelion tou Christou*, and we often translate it "good news of Christ." As we know the Greek word *evangelion* is not used for any "good news" but it is a technical term for news coming from the emperor,[2] whether or not their content is "cheerful and pleasant,"[3] because the news coming from the emperor "is a saving message, that it is not just a piece of news, but a change of the world for the better."[4] The Roman emperors used this term *evangelion* for their gazette because they claimed to be gods, lords, saviors and redeemers of the world. Paul attacks the false and illegitimate imperial claim when he used the phrase "Gospel of Christ." It is the Jewish Messiah, the "Christ Crucified" (1 Cor 1:23)[5] who saves the world for the better. It is the Crucified Lord of Glory (1 Cor 2:8), who changed the world for better. This is the content of the Gospel of Paul.

What is this Better World? Paul expounds the notion of the "improved world" in terms of freedom when he wrote to the Galatians, "For freedom Christ has set us free" (5:1). This is a daring statement. It is *for freedom* that Christ has set us free. The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of Freedom since the entire goal of the salvific work of Jesus is

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[2] Jose Maniparampil, "The Plot of the Gospel of Mark,' *Sanyasa Journal for Consecrated Life*, 3. 2 (2008), 151-64, 162 ft. n. 4.

[3] Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth 1*, tr. by Adrian J.Walker,London, Bloomsbury, 2007, 47.

[4] Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth 1*, 47.

[5] The word *evangelion* can have two basic meanings: either the birth of a prince, or good news of victory in war (Jose Maniparampil, "The Plot of the Gospel of Mark,' 51-64). Paul' use of the term is in the latter sense, good news of victory in war, a victory won on the cross. This is very much evident in his phraseology, "Christ Crucified" and "Crucified Lord of Glory."

freedom.[6] In other words, the Gospel of Christ "by its very nature is a message of freedom and liberation."[7]

A closer look at Pauline statement brings out a further connotation. In the Greek original, there is a definite article before the word "freedom" in Gal 5:1, and a literal translation would be, "for *the* freedom Christ has set us free."[8] There is a subtle difference between freedom and *the* freedom. It is not for any licentiousness or decadence that Christ has set us free, not even for any kind of freedom that we see in the world, but for a particular kind of freedom that Christ has set us free. The world where we enjoy this particular type of freedom is "the better world."

II. Paul's Notion of Freedom

We discuss Paul's notion of freedom mainly based on his Letter to the Galatians, which is the *magna carta* of Christian Freedom.[9] But, what is freedom after all?

A. What is Freedom?

We are quite familiar with expressions like political freedom, economic freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of the will, freedom of conscience, inner freedom, free press and so on. The basic concept of freedom does include "the state of being free", that is, "one is not under physical restraint." It has the sense of "exemption from external control," and "the power and will to determine an action," and definitely "political and national independence" (conversely, some people consider that political interference curtails their freedom).

A further implication of freedom is "the personal liberty" in the sense that one is not in "slavery or bondage" of any kind so that they can

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[6] The Greek word *eleutheria* is used here in the dative case (dative of purpose) and it is put in the emphatic position (the first phrase in the sentence) in order to illustrate that *it is for freedom* that Christ has set us free. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Galatians," 789.

[7] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, art. 1.

[8] The Greek phrase is: *te eleutheria hemas Christos eleutherosen*.

[9] Joseph Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Galatians," 781.

determine their own life or materialize their own potential. Since it is a relationship free of oppression and absence of disabling conditions and fulfillment of enabling conditions, freedom refers to the positive exercise of rights and protection of basic human rights. In short, "freedom is attractive, but needs definition as we see when we list freedom *from* sin, freedom *from* the law, freedom from obligation and control, freedom *for* doing what one wishes, freedom *for* love and service."[10] Without disclaimer or description (expressed through the prepositions like "for," "from") freedom is not understood properly.

B. Freedom in Paul's Thought

First we look at the historical background of the Letter to the Galatians, the most Pauline of all the Letters of Paul[11] and Paul's argument in support of his Gospel of Freedom, and then we deal with the theological implications of his legacy.

Paul uses the term "freedom" (Greek *eleutheria*) or its cognates 11 times in the Letter to the Galatians.[12] The frequency of the term is an important key in the context and Christology of the Letter. Yet we shall not forget that this Letter was written in a tone of apologetics, that is, to defend the Gospel of Paul against both extremes such as the Gospel of the Circumcision and Gospel of the Libertines.[13] His apologetic tone colors his concept of freedom.

1. *Historical Background*

In the province of Galatia, Paul had preached the Gospel of Christ (Gal 1:7) and some pagans welcomed it, and they received the Spirit in an atmosphere of miraculous signs (Gal 3:1-5). After Paul had left Galatia,

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[10] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 480.

[11] Jose Maniparampil, *Story of the Cross: Heart of St. Paul's Spirituality*, Aloor, Biblia, 2009.

[12] "Freedom" in 2:4; 5:1, 13 (twice), "free" in 1:4; 3:28; 4:22, 23, 26, 30, 31,5:1.

[13] Who are the opponents of Paul in Galatia? Though theologians do not have a consensus regarding the answer, I think that Paul has given enough hints when he wrote, "For until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles.

Christian preachers from Jerusalem (Gal 6:13) arrived in Galatia and insisted that the pagan converts to undergo circumcision. They had many arguments in their favor. First, Paul was not preaching the true gospel because he was not insisting on observance of Mosaic laws such as circumcision and Jewish calendrical feasts (Gal 4:10). Paul gave them a truncated gospel since he did not tell them that sharing in the Abrahamic covenant depended on circumcision.[14] Secondly, Paul was accused of opportunism for having once permitted circumcision (Gal 5:11), now denies it to them, thus watering down the requirements of the gospel for the sake of gentile converts.[15] And this was a persuasive message, especially if the preachers denied that Paul was an apostle, had not known Jesus as the Jerusalem apostles like Peter, James and John had (Gal 1:16).[16] They pointed out that Jesus himself was circumcised on the eighth day (Cf. Lk 2:21), and he never repudiated it or cancelled it, and all the Jerusalem apostles and Paul himself were circumcised (Cf. Phil 3:5).

Paul answered their challenge of his apostolic calling and doctrine of Gospel of Freedom by referring back to three things: divine origin of his vocation (Gal 1:11-6), his gospel of freedom approved by the mother Church in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) and his gospel challenged the inconsistency of Peter at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

Like any other letter of Paul, Galatians too have two parts namely the doctrinal section (Chs 1-4) and the hortatory section (Chs 5-6). After the presentation of the facts (*narratio*, 1:16-2:14) and the thesis (the *propositio*, 2:15-21), Paul proves his thesis with six arguments (*probatio*, 3:1-4:31), and then Paul gives a parenetical teaching as how to put his

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But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction" (Gal 2:12). It is the circumcision faction, led by James the Lord's brother (Gal 1:19), who opposed Paul in Galatia. There could be also another faction, the Libertines, who advocated absolute freedom from moral law. Cf. Timothy George, *Galatians*, 407.

[14] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 470.

[15] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Galatians," 781.

[16] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 471.

doctrine of freedom into practice (5:1-6:10). It is true that Paul borrowed a list of virtues from many other sources (thus he lacks originality in the hortatory section), but those values and virtues get a new mode of existence and relevance with the Christ-won Freedom. A brief explanation of all the main points is warranted here.

2. *Paul's Vocation to Effect a Change in God's Plan*

Paul claims that he is an apostle, neither by human commission nor human authority, but by God and Jesus Christ (Gal 1:1), and he received this vocation through an apocalypse (Gal 1:16) exactly as Peter and other disciples became apostles through an apocalypse (Mt 16:16; 11:25). After claiming apostolic authority of his vocation equal to that of other apostles, he also claims that God had set him apart for this before he was formed in the mother's womb (Gal 1:15), thus claiming prophetical authority like Jeremiah (Jer 1:5) and Isaiah (Isa 49:1). He claims vertical authority (coming directly from God) to preach the gospel. It is the conviction of Paul that he received the mandate directly from the Lord that gave him an uncompromising sense of authority. It is not an authority of sitting in seats of power, but the authority to preach the Gospel of Christ. It is this sense of authority, independent of the mother Church in Jerusalem (whose authority would be akin to rabbinical style of authority), that gave him the freedom of the gospel. In short, his apostolic commitment based on his vertical authority gave him freedom that no human authority could grant him.

And this vocation, Paul believed and asserted, was to effect a reversal of order. Until his vocation, the order of divine plan was "first Jews, then the Gentiles." Now the divine plan is "first Gentiles and then the Jews" (Gal 2:7-8). The goal of his vocation was to effect this reversal of God's plan. It's a very daring claim: With his vocation God has changed his plan.

If Paul's claim is valid, then the implication is that it demands a radical hermeneutic re-interpretation of Jesus' mission policy and that of the apostles before him. Jesus initially believed that "he was sent to the lost sons of Israel" (Mt 15:24) and that "it is not fair to throw away the bread of the children to the dogs" (Mt 15:26). But, with Paul, a mission

to the gentiles has gained priority.[17] The previous understanding of mission has been reversed.

3. *Paul's Gospel Approved by the Mother Church*

Paul reminds the Galatians that his Gospel of Freedom was approved by the Jerusalem Church. Along with Barnabas, his mentor, Paul went to Jerusalem to participate in the Jerusalem council (Gal 2:1) taking only Titus with him. With the concrete eye-witness of Titus, who was a Gentile, but uncircumcised, Paul proved that the Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to receive God's gift in Jesus (Gal 2:3). James, the Lord's brother and head of the mother Church in Jerusalem, who previously thought that circumcision was mandatory, agreed to it along with Peter (Acts 15:19). We have a ruling by James in the Acts of the Apostles that the Gentiles who are turning to the Gospel should "not be burdened" (Acts 15:19) with circumcision.[18] This is a proof that Paul's Gospel of Freedom (from the Mosaic Law) was approved by the mother Church.

Paul won the case that the Gentiles are to be integrated totally into Christianity without any discrimination: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). He fought against any type of religious apartheid. There are no "clean" and "unclean" animals or human beings, but all are "clean" human beings. Paul fought fearlessly for equal human dignity of the "untouchable" class of people. This fight for equal dignity is part of his Gospel of Freedom.

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[17] "The mission to the Gentiles" is a theological contribution or "invention" of Paul. But, the evangelists projected this idea backward to the life of Jesus when they presented Jesus as conducting a mission in the Gentile territories (Mk 7 = Mt 15). Nobody before Paul thought of a mission to the gentiles. It was very much shocking for the early Church that the gospel should go outside of Palestine, and this shock of the Church is presented in Acts 10. If Jesus indeed had a mission to the gentiles, Peter who was with Jesus, would not have been shocked when pagan Cornelius went to invite him to his house. Peter was released from the shock by "revelation" from above.

[18] A "ruling" is given by the chair. James the Lord's brother, who was the head of the mother Church in Jerusalem, chaired the Jerusalem Council of AD42.

4. *Paul's Gospel Challenges Peter at Antioch*

But things were far from settled. Though Paul believed that the council approved the total and unreserved integration of Gentiles into the Church, this was not the understanding of James and Peter. When Paul left the council, James took a decision that the Gentiles, who are turning to the Gospel of Jesus, should observe three works of the Law of Moses: "they should abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood" (Acts 15:20). These are Mosaic prescriptions. James did not envisage a total integration of the Gentiles into the Church, but demanded some kind of separation. Peter too followed it uncritically.

It is in this context that we have to read Paul's confrontation of Peter at Antioch. Paul and Peter sat at table with the Gentiles until some people from James reached Antioch. But, when they arrived, Peter drew back for fear of the circumcision faction. This made Paul furious and he scolded Peter in public (Gal 2:11-14). Paul reports his confrontation with Peter to the Galatians to assert that his Gospel of Freedom did not yield to any pressure of the "false brethren" who wanted to revert to the unjust legalism and religious discrimination of Judaism. Paul wanted to assert the truth and freedom of the Gospel, and this called for a fight against all types of religious apartheid.

III. Legacy of the Gospel of Freedom

Paul's discussion in Galatians is "not centered in a simple ritual: circumcision versus non-circumcision. That would be the least of the issues; rather it is a question of two distinct ways of seeing and acting."[19] In fact, there were two issues discussed in the Jerusalem Council: the theological issue and practical issue. The theological issue was twofold, namely, the gospel issue and issue of the mission. The gospel issue was solved by the concrete case of Titus, who was a Greek, but uncircumcised. And the Church accepted that Gentiles turning to the Gospel need not be circumcised. If not for Paul, the Christians of all centuries must have been forced to circumcise as the Muslims do.

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[19] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," in *The New International Bible Commentary*, ed. by Willilam R. Farmer, Bangalore, TPI, 1998, 1728-43,

The mission issue itself was twofold: it was resolved by two decisions. The known world was divided and assigned for mission according to the geographical areas of competence. Jerusalem was assigned to James, Africa and Asia (people of the circumcision) were assigned to Peter, and Europe (Gentile areas) was given to Paul to evangelize (Gal 2:9). Any division causes pain, and to alleviate the anguish and to keep a real unity of the Church, they took the second mission decision, namely, they "remember the poor" (Gal 2:10), which is not a pious remembrance but an active and dynamic commitment to eradicate the misery of poverty from the face of the earth, and that mission commitment would unify different geographical areas of mission.

The practical issue was that of *co-mensality*, that is, sharing the same table with Jews and Gentiles. According to Paul, with the settling of the theological issue, Gentiles are allowed to share the same table with Jews. He believed in a theology that is to be put into practice. But things did not happen in this way. Even Barnabas, his mentor, did not understand Paul's Gospel of freedom properly (Gal 2:13).

It is in this context that Paul developed his notion of freedom. He had to use a two-edged sword, one against strict legalism (Gal 5:2-12) and the other against libertinism (Gal 5:13-15). There were the legalists who wanted to impose the religious Law of Moses on the Gentile converts. There was another group called Libertines, who encouraged throwing off all moral restraints, resulting in a life of utter licentiousness.[20]

Against the legalists, Paul exhorts: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). In the eschatological act of the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom 1:3-4), God has apocalyptically decreed all human beings as justified (Rom 1:16-17), that is, humanity is set free for freedom's sake. Now it is the turn of the believers to make this freedom visible in their life on earth.

In other words, Christ has set us free from the clutches of the law, which was a guardian for infant humanity until Christ came. With the

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[20] J. H. Ropes, The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1929 cited in Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 351.

arrival of Jesus, humanity has matured enough to live without the Law of Moses, matured enough to live the freedom responsibly. The believers in Jesus are asked to live out this maturity in their lives: "stand firm, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." To put it differently, "Do you really want to stumble into the slave-yoke of being under the Torah? Although you have not realized this to date, it is what the opponents recommend to you as "gospel" without telling you that it is slavery that you are taking upon yourselves [5:1ff]. Would you want this after you have just become freed of your pagan slavery under the "elements of the world" [4:3; cf. 4:8]? After all, in Christ you have everything: you are God's children [4:1-7], you have wonderful freedom [5:1], for you are already heirs to the salvation promises given to Abraham [3:29]."[21] Like the Galatians we "must choose one or the other: Christ and freedom, or the law and slavery."[22] The fundamental opposition is between the justice sought in fulfillment of the Law and the justice caused by God in the innocent crucified one."[23] The Law "enslaves, terrorizes and condemns,"[24] whereas justice of the Spirit of Grace "frees, produces life and saves."[25]

There is a tension here. We are freed, redeemed and justified. Yet, we have to live out this freedom, redemption and justification. As W. Grundmann rightly observes, "The Christian stands in the tension of a double reality. Basically freed from sin, redeemed, and reconciled...he is actually at war with sin, threatened, attacked and placed in jeopardy by it."[26] The believers in Jesus are called and challenged to live out the Christ-won freedom lest they fall back to the old yoke of slavery to the law. Just like any freedom is a birth into a new responsibility, the believers,

[21] Nikolaus Walter, "Paul and the Opponents of the Christ-Gospel in Galatia," in *The Galatian Debate*, ed. by Mark D. Nanos, Peabody, Hendrickson, 2002, 362-66, 365.

[22] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Galatians," 789.

[23] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," 1741.

[24] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," 1741.

[25] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," 1741.

[26] W. Grundmann, *"hamartano" TDNT*, I, 313. Cf. Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 385.

whose birthright is Christian freedom, are called to a new life in Christ: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). It is this sense of the divine within oneself that makes one free. Gospel of Freedom is ultimately related to the new identity of those in Christ, which "demands concrete manifestation of their being free sons and daughters."[27]

In Malayalam, the word for vocation is *daiva vili*, which means "call of God," or "call from God." The origin of the vocation is God and therefore, to Him only one is primarily responsible. Vocation is not coming from the bishop or rector or provincial or a mother superior, it is coming from God. It is this sense of divine authority that gives one a special sense of freedom. My first priority is to impress my God: "Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10).

When Paul was arrested and imprisoned even without a decent trial, he boastfully said, "The word of God is not chained." He enjoyed full inner freedom, which cannot be chained by putting his body in fetters and shackles. His mind refused to be chained. This is why even in a situation of house arrest and total alienation, he was "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31). But what are the ramifications of the Gospel of Freedom?

1. *The Lord and the Freedom*

Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:17), "The Lord is the Spirit, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." What shall we conclude from this Pauline philosophy? Look at the logic of this phrase as given below:

The Lord is the Spirit.

The Spirit is *the* Freedom.

Therefore, the Lord is *the* Freedom.

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[27] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," 1742.

It is this particular freedom that Paul means when he writes, "For *the* freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). In the ultimate analysis, the Lord himself is the freedom that God has given us. Christ has set us free for himself. Ironically, it is a kind of slavery. Paul admits that this slavery is of a different kind when he writes (Gal 5:13), "through love become *slaves* to one another." Jesus proved it in the washing of the foot of the disciples. He, the Master and the Lord (Jn 13:13-14), became their slave out of love, because "he knew his own..., he loved them, and he loved them to the end, to the end of love" (Jn 13:1-2). It is this slavery of love that makes one totally liberated. This is the uniqueness of Christian liberty.

2. *The Spirit and the Freedom*

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it chooses... you do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8). Freedom in Christ, in its turn, is a kind of "obedience" to the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16). One is under the Spirit's spell! For what? The Gift of the Spirit is the Gift of Freedom in order to produce Fruits of the Spirit. We have to relate this to Paul's statement, "The Lord is the Spirit." What is, then, this freedom? Is it merely political freedom, or freedom of speech, or freedom of religion or psychological freedom, or is it merely freedom from sin alone? No. it is much more than these negative concepts of freedom. For Paul, "Christian liberty was always grounded on the believers' relationship with Jesus Christ on the one hand and with the community of faith on the other."[28] This Christian liberty is related to Christian faith, which is not general, but particularistic: "Word of God comes as an address to real men and women struggling with issues of life and death, caught in the tension between freedom and bondage, salvation and damnation, this present evil age and in breaking kingdom of God."[29]

It is important to note that for Paul, three things are related: gift of the spirit, gift of freedom and the fruits of the spirit. He wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:17), "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"

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[28] Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 354.

[29] Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 374.

and in Gal 5:23, "fruits of the Spirit" are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Paul's combat against legalism once again bursts out immediately when he writes, "There is no law against such things" (Gal 5:23).

3. *Truth and the Freedom*

In this context, Jesus' statement that "truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32) has to be related to Pauline statement, "for freedom Christ has set us free." Jesus says, "The Truth will make you free." Paul says, "Christ has set us free." Is there a contradiction in Jesus' and Pauline understanding of freedom? No. In fact, both are speaking the same thing: In the Truth of Christ (Cf. Jn 14:6) we have the Truth regarding God and the Truth regarding human beings. The Truth regarding God is that he is Love.[30] The Truth regarding human beings is that they are Free: "*for the freedom* Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). As Pope Benedict observes, "In Christ, God – the Truth – entered the world."[31] It is this Truth of Christ that set us free. What is this Truth of Christ?

According to Thomas Aquinas, "Truth is in God's intellect properly and firstly; in human intellect it is present properly and derivatively. God is truth itself, the sovereign and first truth."[32] As much as we are closer to God that much we are closer to truth and this sense of belongingness to God makes one free. In this sense, Jesus said, "If son makes you free, you are free indeed" (Jn 8:36). The words of Pope Benedict XVI throws light on this: "again and again in the world, truth and error, truth and untruth, are almost inseparably mixed together. The truth in all its grandeur and purity does not appear. The world is "true" to the extent that it reflects God…And it becomes more and more true the closer it draws to God. Man becomes true, he becomes himself, when he grows in God's image. Then he attains to his proper nature."[33] "Redemption' in

[30] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, art. 3.

[31] Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth II*, Bangalore, ATC, 2011, 195.

[32] *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.1 a 4c; 16, a. 5c. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth II*, 192.

[33] Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth II*, 192.

the fullest sense can only consist in the truth becoming recognizable. And it becomes recognizable when God becomes recognizable. He becomes recognizable in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God entered the world and set up a criterion for truth in the midst of history. Truth is outwardly powerless in the world, just as Christ's powerless by world's standards: he has no legions; he is crucified. Yet in his very powerlessness, he is powerful: only thus, again and again, does truth becomes power."[34] Jesus, who is the incarnation of truth, was powerless and helpless before the Roman Governor Pilate, who represented the colonial powers. But, what is Pilate today, what is Jesus today? People who belonged to truth appear to be powerless and helpless, but ultimately it is they who win the war against falsehood.

Mahatma Gandhi says: "If I stood for truth and the whole world banded against me and against the truth, I would still fight them all, no matter if they tore me limb from limb." He called his non-violent fight (*ahimsa*) for freedom *satyagraha*, getting hold on truth. It is this quest for truth made him free. Viewed through the lens of real freedom, even the so called 'civilized nations' are in utter slavery. It is their fear born out of their bondage that propels them for colonial hegemony over other countries, especially the underdeveloped. They have no freedom from fear, and that is their real burden. Any war originates from fear. Any attack has its origin in feeling of insecurity. And people of fear are slaves to their own trepidation.

Rudolf Bultmann related Paul's ethics to his doctrine of (forensic) justification by faith and introduced a distinction between the Pauline *indicative* (you are a justified Christian) and the Pauline *imperative* (then live like a Christian): "*Because* the Christian is freed from sin through justification, he ought to wage a war against sin."[35] The challenge, then, is: are we ready to be lost in a war against falsehood? Conversely, it is this combat that makes one free. In other words, freedom is not the end result of a battle, but it is ongoing war against falsehood and dominion.

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[34] Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Jesus of Nazareth II*, 194.

[35] Referred to in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," in *NJBC*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown *et al.*, Bangalore, 1990, 1382-1416, 1413.

When Jesus was true to his vocation, he became the truth that set human beings free. Truthfulness to oneself is an essential component of authentic freedom. It is the conviction that one is responsible to God that gives the authority of the self, and this helps each one to be ones own master. If you consider yourself as a free person, and acts as if you are free, you are not under any type of imperialism.

4. *Freedom, Faith and Liturgy*

It is the dynamic awareness, not merely knowledge, of the believers that Christ has infused his spirit of freedom into human existence that makes them liberated. When one receives the Spirit of God in baptism one is receiving the gift of freedom. It gives them the freedom of religion not only to practice and preach ones religion, but also to learn and respect other people's faith and religion. Baptism does not make one exclusivistic, but makes one free to continue in his faith even when he is encompassed by an ocean of different faiths.

There can be a question here about the freedom in liturgy, especially in the context of the introduction of the new translation of the Roman Missal in India. A genuine way to understand things in proper light is to distinguish between liturgy, praise and prayer. Often we use these terms interchangeably. But, liturgy in its proper perspective is an *anamnesis* or sacramental remembrance of what God had done in history. Through meaningful rituals and proper rubrics, the Church re-enacts the past in the present to make God's presence felt here and now. With regard to liturgy, Paul was conservative to the core for he wrote to the Corinthians regarding the Eucharistic tradition (1 Cor 11:23), "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you…" Paul does not change the tradition of the Church regarding the Eucharistic Celebration, but he simply hands over what he received. It is so sacred that he does not feel the freedom to alter it.

In liturgy one "raises" his mind, heart and body to God. Prayer is, so to say, just the opposite in direction. It is also an *anamnesis* of what I should do in my history. It is a reflexive "looking down" into the core of ones being and find ones life-goal in the light of liturgy (what God had done in history). Prayer is more of silence, reflection, meditation and

contemplation which lead to take some definitive steps in the present to carry forward God's plan and purpose for the world.

Praise is an act of worship which is not restricted by any rubrics or rituals. It is not only spontaneous but creative to the extend that one can incorporate sacred texts from any religion or faith. In praise, one "raises," so to say, ones hand to God. The charismatic form of 'praise and worship' falls into this category. A proper inculturation takes place in such a scenario.

There is a delicate balance between these three religious acts, and proper freedom is enjoyed when this balance is kept up. A messing up of all these might end up in confusion for the believers.

5. *Freedom as Slavery to Love*

Freedom as slavery! It appears to be a contradiction. How can freedom *be* bondage? Is not freedom *from* slavery? But Paul wrote it so, "through *love* become *slaves* to one another" (Gal 5:13). As we have already seen, in Galatia there were two extreme positions. On the one hand, Judaizers' Gospel of circumcision was one of legalism: "you must be circumcised in order to be saved; Jesus is the New Moses; the works of the law are as binding on Gentiles as they on Jews."[36] And Paul warns that if one let oneself to accept one law would bind oneself to obey the entire law (Gal 5:3). On the other hand, Libertines' Gospel was one of licentiousness: "Why worry about moral rules and regulations or even about the Ten Commandments? We love to sin. God loves to forgive. Why not indulge our natural appetites so as to give God all the more occasions to display his grace?"[37] This logic was very much "appealing to many who had reduced the message of salvation to cheap grace." Against such an inference from his Gospel of Freedom Paul writes, "You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. Rather, serve one another in love" (Gal 5:13-15). Their vocation is coming from God (divine passive 'you were called' implies this). The divine origin of the vocation means that there is a

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[36] Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 375.

[37] Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 375.

divine motif or goal for their liberty. God has called them to a particular type of freedom: for *the* freedom Christ has set you free (Gal 5:1). What is this particular freedom? It is the freedom to love one another: "For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal 5:14). There is a "Law of Christ," but this is not like the Law of Sinai,[38] but "the obligation to bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2).

In Gal 2:4-5, Paul had already asserted that the Gospel of Freedom in Christ is to establish the truth of the Gospel. Obedience to truth is one aspect of the Gospel of Freedom. And the other aspect is that "faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6). The basic question for us is "how to maintain liberty without having a law to direct one's behavior by means of precepts."[39] In short, Gospel of Freedom has double impact: on the one hand it submits itself to the truth (it is slavery to the Truth) and on the other hand, it becomes faith expressing itself through love. This is that particular freedom, to which God has called us and it is for this freedom that Christ has set us free. That is to say, "Do not use your freedom as "an incentive for self-indulgence,"[40] but "through love become *slaves* to one another." Paul's particular type of freedom is a particular type of slavery: slavery of love for the other.

The Greek word for "love" here is *agapauo*. This *agape* should be understood in the light of the Hymn to Love written by Paul to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 13). There are four words in Greek to denote the sense of love. First one is *storge*: this is the love between parents and children and can be called "familial love" or "natural affection." It is the love of a father towards his child, or of the mother tending and looking after her child. Second word is *philia*: it is the love between thick friends or between blood relationship. So, it is friendship or affinity. The third Greek term is *eros*: in our world it means "sexual love" (erotic love) or "love of the couples." But that was not the original intent of the word in the Greek world. It is the love "attracted by the goodness of the

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[38] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 473.

[39] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," 1742.

[40] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Galatians," 789.

object"[41] and "people reach out or up for the good they want to possess in order to be more complete."[42] In Platonic philosophy "this *eros* would be a motivating factor reaching out for the perfect truth and beauty that exists outside the world."[43] It is the motivated love; it is a love that seeks for fulfillment. In other words, in Greek philosophy *eros* was considered to be highest form of love because it searches for the highest truth and beauty.

Against this Hellenistic background, Paul presents *agape* (the fourth word for love) as the highest form of love. What is *agape*?[44] It is unmotivated love. It confers goodness on the object loved. The "*agape* starts with God who needs nothing from creatures but by love brings them into being and ennobles them."[45] In imitation of God, a human being confers goodness on others without any benefit or gratitude in return – that is agape. Jesus asked, "if you love those who love you, what merit have you" (Mt 5:46; Lk 6:32)? This is disinterested love that does not expect anything in return; it is closer to the concept of *nishkama karma* of Indian philosophy.[46] It confers goodness on the object. "Christian faith is not only a freedom from the law, from sin and from sarx-self, but also a freedom to serve others in love or charity (Gal 5:13)."[47] "The purpose of freedom in Christ does not consist in merely changing masters but in living the gift of freedom."[48]

Is it possible to attain this highest form of virtue? If "yes," how? I think we have an answer to this question in the Letter to the Hebrews (5:8), "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he

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[41] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 533.

[42] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 533.

[43] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 533.

[44] Jose Maniparampil, *Pocalunek* (*Kiss on the Soul*), Lodz, 2011, 9 relates the four streams in the Eden Garden to four types of God's love.

[45] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 533.

[46] According to Karma Yoga, *nishkama karma* is the selfless or desire-less action, that is, an action performed without any expectation of fruits or results, and this is the path to liberation. Paul is closer to this idea.

[47] Referred to in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," 1407.

[48] Elsa Tamaz, "Galatians," 1741.

suffered." Jesus taught himself to obey when the occasion arose until it became "an instinct" in him to obey. If we apply this principle in the practice of love, we can attain this *agape*, which is the purest love, the unmotivated love. To love is not easy. When each occasion falls on you to love, teach yourself to love. Learn to love. Learn to love until it becomes your permanent habit, your second nature. It becomes an instinct in you to love without motivation or expectation of benefits. It becomes so to say a reflex action in you to love with a genuine love. Then, there will be no need of an external device called "the law" to make people obey. It is to this love that we are liberated by Jesus. Therefore, "the Christ-won Freedom" is a freedom for agape, which is the only force in the world that can transform our lives for better. One of the tragedies of today is that we have lost faith in the power of victory of love. We are afraid to love and so pretend to love. This, in its turn, creates wounds in others, and creates a labyrinthine bondage. In fact, slavery to real *agapaic love* is the highest form of freedom.

This gift is the freedom for genuine love. It is freedom to exude the inner joy even amidst difficulties and crises, what Jesus said in Mt 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad...for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." It is the freedom to fight for justice even if one is crushed by mafia groups. It is the freedom to display patience in face of overwhelming odds. It is the freedom to serve others selflessly without expecting even a word of gratitude. In short, "Outside of Jesus Christ, human existence is characterized as bondage – bondage to the law, bondage to the evil elements dominating the world, bondage to sin, the flesh, and the devil."[49] We should not misunderstand this statement as merely accepting the religion of Christianity, but accepting Jesus as the freedom of God. Tragically, like the Galatians, most people do not know what to do with "Christ-won Freedom."[50]

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[49] Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 354.

[50] Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary, 354.

6. *Freedom and Justice*

Authentic freedom is always the service of justice. In his work *the Republic*, Plato explains that "the just man alone is truly free" and therefore justice is beneficial. Plato also argues that "to be free city [any free society, community or nation] must avoid extremes of liberty and of authoritarianism. The legislator should rely on persuasion, not force, so that people willingly obey his laws. The underlying idea is that we are free if we willingly follow the demands of reason rather than being coerced by external forces or by unruly desires."[51]

7. *Freedom with Responsibility or Freedom of Responsibility*

Paul perceived the Gospel of Christ as "Gospel of Freedom" because with the advent of Christ, humanity had reached 'adulthood' or 'maturity' and therefore knows how to use freedom responsibly. This awareness of his 'maturity' made him free inwardly. Nothing could enslave him. According to Viktor E. Frankl , 'between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom'

We often hear the dictum "freedom *with* responsibility." This must be properly understood or it can create confusion in the mind about the real meaning of freedom. In fact, when we are responsible, we enjoy freedom. In others words, freedom is thrust upon the person who is responsible to the vision and mission because that person has the law written "not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:3). It is like this: there is no law that dictates to me to do or not to do because I act responsibly. It is not freedom *with* responsibility, but freedom *of* responsibility.

8. *Freedom and Koinonia*

Freedom *of* responsibility does not mean "total" independence from all human authorities and institutions. Paul did not sever his ties with the mother Church. He had severe problems with James, the head of the mother Church in Jerusalem. He fought publically with Peter at Antioch.

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[51] R. F. Stalley, "Plato's Doctrine of Freedom," 1.

But, he considered them as "pillars" of the Church (Gal 2:6). His collection of money for the mother Church in Jerusalem (Cf. Gal 2:10) and his two or three visits to Jerusalem (Cf. Gal 1:18; 2:1) are evidences for his *koinonia* with the Church. Paul did not start a new denomination or sect when he had problems with the Church and its authorities. Freedom does not mean 'severing the ties' with the Church. Freedom to differ, yet remain to the Catholic fold – this demands not only psychological freedom arising from emotional health, but a sound ecclesiology which teaches that the Church is a communion of individual Churches.

Conclusion

Paul's gospel of freedom is about a particular type of freedom which he explained in his specially chosen phraseology: for *the* freedom Christ has set us free. Christ has restored "freedom to itself" and "showed it the right path."[52] Christian freedom "never corresponds to licentiousness or the whim to do whatever one wants," writes Pope Benedict XVI. According to him, Paul's Gospel of freedom "conforms to Christ, and so is authentic service to one's brothers, especially the neediest" because authentic freedom is not only religious freedom but it is the service of justice with new forms of solidarity.[53]

Paul's Gospel of freedom "does not by any means necessitate the abolition of moral obligation."[54] Psychological freedom of emotional health, political and economic freedom of a nation and all other different forms of freedom flow from the conviction of individual and national unique identity. To put it differently, the Christ-won freedom is slavery to *agapaic love* which is the only force in the world that can transform our lives for better.

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[52] Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* art. 99.

[53] Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Instruction onChristian Freedom and Liberation* art. 99.

[54] F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, Peabody, Hendrickson, 2003, 266.

Paul's Gospel of Freedom gives enough space for theological freedom to radically interpret Jesus and the Sacred Scriptures without however falling into theological anarchy. When God is pushed to the backburner, then there is no truth, no justice and there is total bondage. Theology is the ideal, and a sound moral and ecclesiological life is the praxis.

The ecological ramification of Gospel of Freedom is: "Everything is possible for me, but everything is not good for me," writes Paul. I do not have the freedom to pollute the cosmos? I do not have the freedom to deforest earth? I do not have the freedom to "loot" the resources of the feration in the name of development and progress.

Though Paul was very enthusiastic to preserve the Eucharistic tradition, he took freedom to decorate his writings with liturgical doxology, dictions and benedictions that his writings entered into the sacred canon of the New Testament. Paul's Gospel of Freedom asks us to stop to be the prisoners of the past, but become visionaries of the future. Paul writes to the Philippians, "This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" (Phil 3:13). It demands from us not merely freedom *with* responsibility, but freedom *of* responsibility.

If only our caste-ridden and communally polarized society realize the import of *the* freedom implied in the Pauline daring statement, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28)! Then , we could build a better society.

The confrontation between Paul and Peter at Antioch with regard to the question of human dignity definitely is a proof for the freedom of speech, and if this does not exist as George Washington maintained, "Then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter."

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Freedom of the Disciples of Jesus in History

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Freedom and liberation were fundamental dimensions of the message of Jesus. The Kingdom of God offers to those who accept God as ruler freedom; freedom from enslavement to the rule of Satan, sin and death; freedom from social and religious pressures, and the enslaving needs of an imprisoned self; freedom from worry and fear; freedom to love God and one's neighbour. The Church, the community of Jesus' disciples, should mediate the freedom brought forth by Jesus. It should witness to the liberation which he proclaimed through word and deed and subject itself to his judgment so that he continues to liberate it from all un-freedom. The freedom which Jesus brought forth must be realized, first of all in the community he founded, namely, the Church. Only then can it become authentic witness to true freedom and liberation and become a credible and effective champion of human freedom.

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Introduction

But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom. Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us.[1]

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[1] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, New York: The Modern Library, no year, 268.

The chilling words of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov,* remind us of the Church's complicity with the forces of un-freedom. Much has been written about it, and it is not my intention to produce another criminal history of Christianity.[2] But at the same time, it is good to be reminded about it occasionally and try to learn from history, the good teacher. In the process, we will, perhaps, find the same forces at work in some way in the Church even today.

What is freedom? Aristotle defined freedom as a human being's autonomous self-determination to do good or evil. According to Augustine, the word could only be used in the sense of freedom to do good, since freedom to act in an evil way is not freedom. Thomas Aquinas tried to synthesize both these views. These classical definitions are no longer adequate to explain the dynamics of freedom in contemporary society. Today freedom is understood primarily as a dialectical relationship between inner liberation (conversion) and outer liberation (liberation from structures of enslavement). In other words, social processes of liberation and personal emancipation are intimately related. No one understands freedom today as the complete annulment of norms and the constant extension of individual liberties to the point of complete emancipation from all order. Kant's call, *sapere aude,* and the grand promises of the Enlightenment with its radicalization of individualistic tendencies have not led to true freedom. "Freedom, if it is not to lead to deceit and self-destruction, must orient itself by the truth, that is, by what we really are, and must correspond to our being. Since man's essence consists in being-from, being-with and being-for, human freedom can exist only in the ordered communion of freedoms."[3] In other words, freedom realizes itself in a network of relationships. This is the essence of Christian freedom, too. The sources of Christian freedom are Jesus Christ and his Gospel "which is a message of freedom and a force for liberation."[4] Let us first of all see what these sources tell us about freedom.

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[2] Indeed there has been an attempt to write such a history. The multivolume enterprise of Karlheinz Deschner, *Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums*, Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowolt, begun in 1986 is the best example.

[3] Joseph Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," *Communio*, 23 (Spring, 1996), 34.

[4] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the'Theology of Liberation'", Vatican City, August 6, 1984. The text is taken from *Origins*, 14 (September 13, 1984), 194-204.

The Roots of Christian Freedom

Although the words 'free' and 'freedom' do not occur frequently in his preaching, freedom and liberation were fundamental dimensions of the message of Jesus. The Kingdom of God offers to those who accept God as ruler freedom; freedom from enslavement to the rule of Satan, sin and death; freedom from social and religious pressures, and the enslaving needs of an imprisoned self; freedom from worry and fear; freedom to love God and one's neighbour.[5] Jesus attacked the vicious circle of un-freedom and put forward discipleship as the way to authentic freedom. Jesus' message gave his listeners the courage to be free. His liberating activities, like healings, exorcisms, association with sinners, freeing people from the pressures of rituals etc. were the accompanying signs of his liberating message. He did all these because he himself was free and his freedom was founded on his faith in God and his openness to the needs of others. Because of this, he was free from many conventional restraints and from doubts about his fundamental mission.

The community founded by Jesus should mediate the freedom brought forth by him. It should witness to the liberation which he proclaimed through word and deed and subject itself to his judgment so that he continues to liberate it from all un-freedom. The freedom which Jesus brought forth must be realized in his community.[6] Jesus said: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."[7] Truth is discovered by hearing the word of God. The Church is the community of those who hear the word of God and do it.[8] Therefore, the Church is the community where truth is realized and freedom proclaimed. The Church has to be a community of freedom. This is fundamental to its nature. Has the Church always been a community of freedom? I will answer this question by studying three problematic areas in the Church: power in the Church, the right to dissent in the Church, and the Church's claim to be the custodian of truth and orthodoxy.

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[5] Rudolf Pesch, "Jesus a Free Man," *Concilium,*(March, 1974), 58.

[6] Leander Keck , "The Son Who Creates freedom," *Concilium,* (March, 1974), 71-82.

[7] Jn 8:31-32.

[8] Lk 8:21

1. Power in the Church

The Church, like any social system, possesses a lot of power. But power in the Church is vicarious power, conferred by the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ.[9] The confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and his sovereignty are, according to Paul, the fundamental features of Christianity. The failure to realize this has created many problems in the Church. The decisive factor in the New Testament understanding of the concepts of power, sovereignty etc. is that all exercise of power in Christ's Church is understood as *diakonia* (service) and not as *arche* (power). This is too well known to be elaborated here.[10] This has also been the norm in the early Church. Although power and authority in the Church became institutionalized very early (monepiscopacy is attested to as early as AD 110), the Church was still a communion of the people of Christ, and power and authority were exercised for and with them. With Constantine, the structures of Roman administration were carried over into the Church. The Church also had to develop organizational structures beyond the local level, like the Ecumenical Councils, which represented the 'universal Church'; thus the concept of universal ecclesiastical power began to develop. Gradually, the papacy became its sole custodian and accumulated a lot of power in its hands. The Reforms of Gregory VII (pope from 1073) considerably strengthened the policy of Roman centralization which continues without much change till the present day. The pope became an absolute monarch in the Western Church, and the bishop something like an autocrat in his diocese. The emerging canon law supported this absolutism, making the pope and the bishops 'governors' and 'judges' of people, rather than pastors and servants.

The Reformation challenged some of these authoritarian structures and broke away from the Church in the name of the freedom of the Christian. Whether the quest for freedom was realized in the Reformation traditions is another question altogether. In the Catholic tradition, the Council of Trent enhanced papal and episcopal power

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9.   Matt 28:18-20.

10.   For a concise but good presentation see, Josef Blank, "The Concept of Power in the Church: New Testament Perspectives," *Concilium*, 197 (3/1988), 3-12.

further. The centralization and bureaucratization of the Church reached new height with the Roman curia now taking up the governance of the Church in its hands. The dogmas of papal infallibility and primacy proclaimed by Vatican Council I in 1870 sealed the monarchical structure of the Church once and for all. Episcopal authority was effectively sidelined. Fortunately, the Second Vatican Council effected some changes in this regard. Although it emphasized the importance of hierarchical communion with the pope, it also spoke of episcopal collegiality.

History shows that the use of power in the Church has taken different historical forms, and therefore, it is contingent. Ecclesiastical power is vicarious and every form it takes is not necessarily the will of God. If the exercise of power has assumed so many different forms in history and was influenced by diverse historical necessities, it must now respect contemporary needs, values and norms, like justice, equality, and the growing democratic ethos throughout the world. It is difficult to understand what role a hierarchical power structure as it exists in the Church today can play in the world of today.

The use or misuse of power in the Church today is the subject of heated discussion. Power in the Church can be justified only on two grounds: 1) the conservation and transmission of the deposit of faith and 2) the preservation of unity in the Church. When judged from these perspectives, we find that the exercise of power in the Church today has often nothing to do either with the conservation of the deposit of faith or the preservation of unity. Often other considerations are at play in the Church when it exercises its power. Besides the loss of individual freedom, reputation of persons and the credibility of the Church, what is at stake in the wilful exercise of power in the Church is also the cause of theological and liturgical pluralism which affects the very survival of the Church in the modern world. Authority in the Church has often been a monolithic exercise of power, bypassing the rights and responsibilities of the local Churches and of individual Christians.

2. The Right to Dissent

The Church would be happy to advocate for its members the kind of obedience and submissiveness which Ignatius of Loyola advocated

for his followers. He compared his sons to 'the dead body which can be carried anywhere and treated in any fashion' or 'the stick in the hand of an old man which allows itself to be used wherever and for whatever purpose he wishes'. But even he set a limit to obedience and the rights of authority: '. . . at least where it is clear . . . that no sin is involved.'[11] It is very important to notice that the ultimate authority here is the one who is to obey. He decides whether there is sin. His conscience has the final say. This is true of submission to the Church as well. Vatican II clearly shows us the importance of conscience when it says:

> It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow his conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God who is the last end. Therefore, he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience."[12]

From this freedom follows the right and duty of the members of the Church to protest against, and where necessary, oppose the misuse of power and the continuation of undesirable structures and norms in the Church. This has always been regarded as possible by the Church's tradition,[13] although with certain limitations. But the Church has suppressed this right in various ways, even in the name of being faithful to its mission. The concern and solicitude of the Church for its mission has become so institutionalized and bureaucratized, that the procedures adopted by the Church often lacks many safeguards which are granted normally in any legal procedure. If one believes in the presence and

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[11] As quoted by Peter Huizing and Knut Walf, "What does the 'Right to Dissent' Mean in the Church?,"*Concilium*, 158 (8/1982), 6.

[12] *Dignitatis Humanae*3; incidently, Pope Gregory XVI, a reactionary pope from the first half of the nineteenth century, in his encyclical letter *Mirari vos* (1832) condemned the freedom of conscience as a 'false and absurd maxim' and as a 'madness'.

[13] Ibid., 3-12. Also see in the same volume, James Provost, "The Catholic Church and Dissent," pp. 13-18 for a definition of the term dissent and other related issues.

activity of the Spirit in the Church and the diversity of charisms in the community, one will surely encounter dissent; suppressing this dissent is tantamount to extinguishing the Spirit. Dissent in the present day Church is often not the result of a crisis in faith or discipline, but of imposing a Eurocentric Christianity everywhere. It is the result of not reading the 'signs of the times'.

There is, without doubt, plenty of dissent in today's Church, often destructive dissent, and the time has come for a consensus regarding ways to deal with it in the correct way. Some examples of dissent from the history of the Church may be helpful in this regard. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), a famous bishop of North Africa in the third century, was a man committed to the absolute unity of the Church which he portrayed in many vivid imageries; he nevertheless dissented with Stephen (d. 257), bishop of Rome, on the issue of heretical baptism[14] and was also ready to defend his decision to dissent. The basis for unity in the Church, according to him, was the Spirit and not the bishop of Rome; he believed that the episcopal authority was supreme and that the bishop of Rome had no jurisdictional primacy over him. Diversity in practices was allowed but not schism. Both Cyprian and Stephen held on to their views, and unfortunately, we do not have any final ruling on this controversy.

In the Middle Ages, there arose many heresies in the Church, like the dissent of the Waldensians who began their activity between 1173 and 1175. It was a protest movement by a group of laity, both men and women, whose main objective was to obtain the freedom to preach. They did not want to be incorporated into the clerical and monastic structure of the Church, but at the same time, wanted to exercise their fundamental Christian right to proclaim the good news. The movement was a Christocentric lay brotherhood with evangelical poverty and a missionary thrust centred on the Bible. They wanted to follow Christ in this way, but this frightened the hierarchy of the Church because it was feared that they would snatch away power and authority from the hierarchy. The movement was suppressed and condemned as heresy,

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[14.] A controversy in the early Church regarding the validity of baptism given by heretics.

although there was nothing unorthodox in their teachings. Their fault seemed to be that they claimed a certain autonomy of vocation.

Martin Luther rebelled against the medieval Church because he felt in his conscience that many of the things that were happening in the Church of his time were theologically, pastorally and spiritually damaging. The preaching of indulgences made people flee the penalty of sin and not sin itself, he said. It gave them a false sense of security with regard to their salvation. He wrote these things to his bishop as a member of the Church and he detailed this with his 95 theses on indulgence and penance. In his exposure of the theological weaknesses of the theory of indulgence, Luther offered a sensitive criticism of a Church practice which was not entirely undisputed at that time. The Church saw it as an attack on the power of the Church. This was in fact not the case. It was a far more important theological question, namely, justification, but it was pictured as a challenge to the authority of the Church by the curia. Here was dissent based on faith, theology and pastoral spirituality. The whole debate, unfortunately, took a different turn. Even a rather conservative Church historian like Hubert Jedin calls the attitude of Rome in this case as complete neglect of pastoral and apostolic responsibility. The whole question is whether the Church took Luther's right to dissent seriously, a dissent which was based on sound theological reasoning. Luther was a critic but did the Church deal with him suitably? Was there real dialogue about what he really wanted to say?

Coming to the modern period, we have the suppression of the right to dissent theologically unleashed in the wake of the so-called Modernist Controversy. It was the suppression of all liberal, anti-Scholastic and historical-critical forms of thought in the Roman Catholic Church from 1890 to 1910. The leaders of this movement dissented from certain cultural features of the Catholic theology prevailing at that time such as: (1) mandatory neo-Thomism imposed on the Church (*Aeterni patris* of Leo XIII), very well articulated by his successor Pius X's *Pascendi,* that Catholic orthodoxy is inseparable from its scholastic expression;[15] (2) Integralism, a view that prevailed in the

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[15.] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis,*40 (1907), 636-637.

Church at that time which said that the Catholic doctrinal system was a system of doctrines so rigorously connected and linked with each other (as is the system of Aristotle and St. Thomas) that no single point could be detached from the others, since the light of truth that illumined each individual part was the same that illumined the whole.[16] This sort of deductive method was being challenged by history, experience and human dynamics, and the Modernists were asking questions from this perspective; (3) fundamentalism, both biblical and dogmatic, and the rejection of human experience which was condemned by the Church as subjectivism. This was challenged by the Modernists as unhistorical; (4) Ultramontanism, which extended absolute support to papal centralism, now armed with the dogmas of papal primacy and infallibility, to proceed decisively against any liberal thought. Today most of the teachings of the Modernists are accepted as part of Catholic theology, but their dissent at that time was efficiently and ruthlessly put down.[17] Throughout history the institutional Church has been distinguished by a large measure of authoritarianism, and it has been monolithic and intransigent in its internal relationships, in quelling dissent, and in suppressing legitimate criticism. It has also shown intolerance towards the outside, towards worldviews and ideologies different from its own; it has also legitimized its power structures using religion in order to maintain its privileged position in society. Dissent in the Church is not merely voicing a different opinion, but has deeper implications. In the final analysis, it is the manifestation of the perpetual tension that exists between community and individualism, charism and legalism, service and power, Utopia and system, horizontal communication and bureaucracy, participation and centralism, orthopraxis and orthodoxy, creativity and repetition, celebration and ritualism, poverty and ostentation.[18] This tension will always exist in the Church and, therefore, there will be and should be dissent in the Church and this need not always be destructive. In order that it may not be destructive, dissent in the

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[16] Gabriel Daly, "The Dissent of Theology: The Modernist Crisis," *Concilium,* 158 (8/1982), 55.

[17] These ideas are taken from the above article, pp. 53-57.

[18] Juan José Tamayo-Acosta, "The Importance of Organized Opposition Groups and their Rights in the Church," *Concilium,*158 (8/1982), 89.

Church has to have a spirituality, a spirituality of following Jesus which will provide the right context for legitimate dissent.[19]

3. The Quest for Truth in the Church

Although the Gospel says that the 'truth will make you free' (Jn 7:32), there have been many victims of truth in the history of the Church. The truth that makes us free is the truth about God's universal love expressed in Jesus Christ. This truth is a liberating truth and not an ideology for domination. But in the history of the Church truth has often been used as an ideology for domination.

'Avoid heresy,'[20] Paul admonishes Titus, and the Church has ever since tried to do this with whatever means it could. But the same Paul had also said: 'There must be factions among you,' [21]for the purpose of discernment. Truth and heresy are not new concepts in the Church. The fundamental dogmas of Christianity emerged from a heap of heresies and even today no one can claim to have presented an adequate account of the heresies and schisms in the early Church. Nor have early Fathers and Councils ever claimed to have exhaustively presented the truth about Jesus Christ. What they did was to present the truth about Jesus Christ in Hellenistic categories. Surely there were many other philosophies existing in the world at that time which could also have offered adequate categories for the expression of the Christian faith. That the early Church found its way to the Greco-Roman world and made itself at home in its philosophy is no reason to say that the final word about Christian doctrines has been spoken. The expressions of the truth about Jesus Christ as formulated by the early Fathers and Councils were not final. But they could prevent the destruction of the faith by heresies at that time.

In the Middle Ages there arose again 'popular' heresies, which though not strictly theological, like the ones in the early Church, nevertheless had something to do with the nature of the Church and its mission. They wanted to go back to the scriptures which seemed to be

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[19] Herman Häring, "The Rights and Limits of Dissent," *Concilium,* 158 (8/1982), 95-107, here 105.

[20] Tit 3:10.

[21] 1 Cor 11:19.

sidelined by the Church's 'traditions'; they demanded less ritualism; they preached and practised evangelical poverty and itinerant preaching; they emphasized equality in the Church. There surely were aberrations and elements contrary to the Gospel in the teachings of some of these heretics. But all of them called for a return of the Church to the truth of the Gospel. However, the Church, with the help of the secular arm, took up the task of suppressing these heresies. But they did not die down. When the Catharists and the Waldensians were suppressed there emerged the Spiritual Franciscans, Béghards and Béguines, Fraticelli, Wycliff, Huss, Savonarola, and many others; and the Church reacted with more repression. Was this enterprise of suppressing heresies with torturing and burning people alive a Christian enterprise? Even today's moderate historical judgment would say that it represents a very disturbing episode in the history of the Church and that it was totally unworthy of the Gospel.

The Protestants who affirmed the 'freedom of the Christian' were not far behind. We have for example the brutal persecution of the Anabaptists and other dissenters which arose alongside the Churches of the Reformation. The Anabaptists with their humanist, biblicist and mystical streams of doctrines challenged many ideas of the Reformers themselves, thus being called Radical Reformers, the Left Wing of the Reformation, Non-Conformists etc. They challenged some of the key concepts of the Reformers, justification, the doctrine of baptism, their social morality etc. Their introduction of rebaptism was condemned particularly severely and they were persecuted and executed *en masse*. The main line Protestant Churches, like their Catholic counterparts, believe that their own doctrinal positions are true and any deviation is always a falsehood.

The concept of holy war or just war was yet another repressive measure advocated by Christianity in defence of the truth. Augustine had claimed that the maintenance of the moral order and the punishment of evildoers comprise an acceptable war aim, that it was morally justifiable to put down heretics and overcome pagan peoples by means of force provided that the intention is pure. In the Christendom of the medieval times, the enemies of God were the enemies of the empire. Christians had the duty to defend God's Kingdom and to enable it to

prevail. Thus the identification of the state with the moral good and the marking of outsiders as enemies of God produced the moral justification for war. This pernicious doctrine led to such evil enterprises as the Crusades. Christendom ruled by the pope and the emperor identified itself with the Kingdom of God and defended its rights with the sword, in the name of God, and extirpated unbelievers. Only the one truth of Christendom had a right. Deviant individuals were not tolerated within it and the government wielded the sword within and without with the Church's approval. In the name of the one truth, there was little or no respect for the just concern of an opponent to defend his individual belief, conviction, culture, and territory. It took centuries before the second Vatican Council could rectify this and say: "This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power."[22] The Council reversed the accepted Catholic teaching which gave freedom only to the truth and not to persons, claiming that error had no rights. The conquest of Saxony by Charlemagne, the 'discovery' and invasion of Latin America, and the colonization and Christianization of Africa are at times justified by taking recourse to the theory of just war.

That this concern for truth has not only theological but also political causes makes it even more dubious. The birth of formal orthodoxy in the early Church was simultaneous with the formation of the Christian empire which needed political and religious unity. The quest for unity of faith and of the Church was often prompted by other considerations. Peace within the Church was decisive for the maintenance of good order within the empire; so it became a matter for the emperor and the empire to maintain peace in the Church. The Ecumenical Council became a judicial institution of the empire instead of the expression of collegiality in the Church, the emperor himself convoking it throughout the first millennium. Emperors would also, without much difficulty, switch between 'true' faiths. This same attitude was carried over into the second millennium with the formation of Christendom. Church and state constituted one unity. Heresy threatened both the Church and the state and hence a

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[22] *Dignitatis Humanae*2.

common crusade against it was justified. The science of theology flourishing in the universities tried to develop an organic, uniform formulation of the faith and it gave rise to dissent; and the Church, and its institutions supported by the emerging science of canon law, dealt with these doctrinal conflicts decisively. But the multiplication of conflicts made the safeguarding of the truth by the pope and the bishops alone increasingly difficult.[23] Thus the setting up of institutions with juridical powers independent of the pastoral responsibility of the bishops began, like the Inquisition, with damaging consequences for the Church.

The institution of the Inquisition, with its sorry reputation for violence and its arrogant display of ecclesiastical power, amply recorded in Church history, deserves special mention. It has compromised the credibility of the Church considerably. The Inquisition properly so called came into being when in 1232 the emperor Frederick II issued an edict for the whole empire entrusting the hunting-out of heretics to state officials. Thereupon Pope Gregory IX, fearing Frederick's political ambitions, claimed this office for the Church and appointed papal inquisitors. In 1252 Innocent IV by his bull *Ad extirpanda*, allowed the use of torture to break the resistance of the accused. In 1542 Paul III established the Congregation of the Inquisition as the final court of appeal in trials for heresy, giving it enormous powers; it was reorganized by Sixtus V in 1588. Once the Protestant challenge ceased, the Inquisition concentrated on social anomalies like witchcraft or on internal enemies like dissenting movements such as Jansenism. The French Revolution and the accompanying turmoil violently shook European society as a whole, and the papacy in particular. It resulted in the 'Restoration' whose dominant value was submission to authority without question. Pope Gregory XVI's programmatic encyclical *Mirari vos* of 1832 said that the Church must set aside the *indulgentiam benignitatis* and by virtue of its divine authority *virga compescere*. Increasing attention to the doctrinal dimension of the life of the Church, attention to the details in which the faith was formulated and an extension of the scope of doctrinal decisions binding in faith etc. made the Inquisition and the papacy to move from

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[23.] Giuseppe Alberigo, "Institutional Defence of Orthodoxy," *Concilium*, 192 (4/1987), 85-86.

the role of guardians of the deposit of faith and orthodoxy to that of definers of faith and doctrine; from the sphere of discipline to the sphere of doctrine. The First Vatican Council cemented this with its theology of revelation and the dogmas of papal primacy and infallibility. It presented revelation as a body of truth abstracted from the historical process – a ready-made truth; Catholics had the option either of accepting this position or of falling into error. The reaction to Modernism and other liberal movements in the first half of the twentieth century, the rabid fervour with which error and those in error were persecuted with secret and arbitrary trials, denunciations, ruining of individuals and their reputation, suppression of academic freedom etc. proved that the Church was ready to safeguard the truth of its doctrines at any cost. It was Pope Pius X, well known for his anti-Modernism purge, who in 1908, changed the title of the Congregation of the Inquisition into the Holy Office, and Paul VI in 1965 gave it the title Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The many actions of this important organ of the Roman Curia, which has changed its name several times, but not its basic nature, have shown that the "reforms" it has undergone have not been adequate. Giuseppe Alberigo has pointed out the following inadequacies in the functioning of this doctrinal watchdog of the Catholic Church: "*Ecclesiologically inadequate,* in that it deputes questions of safeguarding orthodoxy to a body distinct from and isolated from the people of God and from those responsible for pastoral care; *theologically inadequate*, in that it makes reference to an abstract and ideologized acceptance of the deposit of faith to the detriment of its pastoral nature and multiform riches; *historically inadequate*, because it is still strictly bound to models of ideological conformism which the modern world has superseded."[24]

Many examples can be pointed out to show that freedom has been and is still being suppressed in the Church in many ways, through its violation of fundamental human rights, silencing of persons, excommunications, legal rigorism, denial of the right to academic

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[24] Ibid., 92-93.

scholarship and research etc.; there is a wide gap between the liberating theory and repressive practice in the Church.[25] Before I conclude this article, I would like to briefly point to the philosophical basis of this repressive practice in the Church, namely, its epistemology, and add a theological corrective to it. The Church's epistemology claims a crude realism with regard to knowledge about the world and God; it also creates a dualism between reason and experience. This leads to an unhistorical concept of truth and revelation. What must be done, believed and hoped for are objectively given, to be taught to the people by the hierarchy. This objective data of revelation allows no place for the subjective ways of the believer in making the faith his/her own. All subjective conditions for knowing and arriving at the truth are completely rejected. Therefore, there is a constant temptation to formulate an absolutist language and a uniform interpretation of texts. When reason is divorced from its anchor in experience, right doctrine becomes an absolute, other-worldly reality. The danger here is arbitrary reason with arbitrary power to decide truth and reality; power to stipulate the correct reading and interpretation of texts and to silence dissidents. A detached and abstract concept of reason is considered as the vehicle of eternal truth. Correctness of doctrine is all that is important, since the ultimate question concerns the nature of reality whose interpretation is entrusted to ecclesiastical guardians. This gives the Church a source of power to control and demand obedience with repressive effects.

Against this we say that revelation and truth must be understood from a more modern perspective. Revelation makes no sense without the human being's answer in faith. This response, that takes place in history as a definite experience, in a concrete language, also belongs to the content of revelation. We are not adding anything to revelation here but are interpreting revelation. Neither part is independently the whole

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[25] Cf. the article by F.J. Laishley in three parts: "Repression and Liberation in the Church: I. An Anatomy of Repression;" "Repression and Liberation in the Church: II. An Anatomy of Liberation;" "Repression and Liberation in the Church: III. Theological Reflection," *Heythrop Journal*, XXIX (1988), 157-174; 329-342; 450-460.

of revelation. So a completely objective content of revelation outside of history is a questionable concept. The whole of revelation and faith exist in history. There is no zone that is immune from the storms of man's history, no zone of pure theology.[26] But the Spirit who is constantly active in the Church and whose 'strength is revealed in weakness', preserves the identity of the Christian faith intact, and helps it to 'remain in the truth' through the vicissitudes of history.

But truth can be attained only from an historically situated perspective, that is, there is a perspectivism in every assertion of truth. We can possess it only in a historical, perspectivistic or relative way. Coming to the truth is a continual historical process. Truth is oriented towards universal consensus but is always sought within a constantly changing situation of question and answer. It is never found fully in my interpretation of reality but in going beyond my historical answer. I need also the other person's truth (perspective) in order to come to the fullness of truth. The articulations of faith also have this perspectivism because they are also made in a historical situation of question and answer. Creative faithfulness to the Gospel is possible only in a changing and developing history. Therefore, to suppress the freedom of the Christian in the name of truth is no service to the truth.

Yves Congar, while speaking about the identity of the Church says that the identity of or the truth about the Church consists in the fact that it is an organic whole, constituted by a network of relationships and interactions. "It is impossible to restrict oneself to *a single* criterion," he says, "to ancient texts without the living magisterium, or to the living magisterium without the ancient texts, or to authority without the community, or to the latter without the former, or to the apostolicity of the ministry without apostolicity of doctrine, or *vice versa*, or to the Roman Church separated from catholicity, or to the latter detached from

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[26.] Edward Schillebeeckx, "Infallibility of the Church's Office," *Concilium*, (March, 1973), 78.

the former ... all these criteria together should ensure a living faithfulness and identity in the full historicity of our lives and our knowledge."[27] There is no other way in which legitimate freedom can be maintained in the Church. When one organ of the Church claims for itself all the 'freedoms' and all the other constituencies of the Church are mere beneficiaries of this freedom, there is no chance for the 'message of freedom and liberation' to be actualised in the Church and in the world.

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[27.] Yves Congar, "Norms of Christian Allegiance and Identity," *Concilium*, (March 1973), 25.

Editorial

The Second Vatican Council was a landmark in the history of the Church. In 1958 Pope John XXIII was elected Pope and within a few months, already in January 1959, the Pope announced his intention of convoking the Second Vatican Council to the surprise of the Roman Curia and the entire Christian world. The goal of the Council, as declared by the Pope, was 'renewal of the Church', *aggiornamento* or updating of the Church in view of the radical changes in the contemporary world.

Council's Pastoral Constitution on 'Church in the Modern World' (*Gaudium et Spes*) summarized the radical changes in the world and the task of the Church: "The Church has the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel" (no.4). The Constitution mentioned that the changes in the world are in the areas of spiritual, intellectual, scientific, biological, psychological, social and technological. What is more significant is that human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic and evolutionary one. Church has the tremendous task of pacing with the world and not to be alienated from the changing world. The Church needed new impulse and energy for its apostolate, new forms and structures, new understanding and interpretation of its doctrines,teachings, and mission. It was meant to be mainly a pastoral council to initiate new approaches and to give new directions to the Church.

After three years of immediate preparations, the Council was opened in 1962 and it continued for four years till 1965 with one session of three months every year. In between Pope John XXXIII died (1963) and Pope Paul VI was elected as the new Pope, who continued the Council as it was planned. More than 2500 Catholic Bishops participated in the sessions of the Council,and about 150 'Observers' from the other Christian Churches in addition to several hundredsof invited experts. The Council

promulgated sixteen documents, four of them 'Constitutions',nine 'Decrees' and three 'Declarations'. The Constitutions are more of doctrinal matters.Decrees are more of practical church matters and Declarations are on public issues and they are more of explorative in nature.

Fifty years are over since the beginning of the Council. Indeed the Council initiated several radical changes in self-understanding the Church, its mission, its liturgy, its relationship with the world, with other Churches and other religions. This number of *Jeevadhara* has selected four major areas of the Church, tries to point out the major achievements of the Council, and to focus on the major challenges today and articulates the emerging new trajectories. The article by Kuncheria Pathil CMI is a general one highlighting the significant contributions of the Council in the area of ecclesiology. Emphasis on the mystery of the Church points to the limitations of the Church as an institution. The Church cannot be defined and strictly speaking we cannot say who are inside the Church and who are outside. The Church is God's work and action here on earth, and not something we have created. Those who respond to the Word of God and become disciples of Christ may be found even outside the visible boundaries of the Church. The Council presented the Church as the 'People of God' where bishops, priests and laity are all equals and every member has his/her role and mission. All members have a prophetic, priestly and pastoral role in the Church, and official ministers of the Church do not have any exclusive claim over charism, but they are the servants of the people of God. The Council thus gave a momentum to the emergence of the leadership of the laity in the Church. The teaching on the 'Collegiality of the Bishops' and the rediscovery of the synodal and conciliar structures in the administration of the Church are extremely significant for the life and functioning of the Church. It made a shift from Papal Monarchical system to a participatory Church. In the second part of the article, the author highlights some of the problems and challenges the Church is facing today. "Reception" of the Council and the implementation of the Council's decisions and orientations are still the major challenges before the Church. Legitimate autonomy of the Local Churches and their identity in their specific socio-cultural contexts are major challenges for the new Churches in Asia, Africa and South America.

Perhaps, the most revolutionary change the Council made was a shift from the Church to the World which God loved so much and sent His only Son to redeem it. The presence and action of Christ and the Spirit in the midst of the world in transforming it into a new creation has a lot of theological consequences in understanding the world, the cultures and religions of various peoples and their relationship to the Church. Felix Wilfred in his article elaborates on this theology of the world and invites the churches for a new pastoral praxis. The Church has to be fully committed to its mission in the world by totally involving in the civil space along with people of all religions, cultures and ideologies. Freedom and justice for all peoples, peace, fellowship of all, respect for life and ecological issues vital to our planet Mother Earth are far more important than Church's institutional and internal matters.

The first document published by the Council was on Liturgy, which badly needed renewal. Roman Liturgy was celebrated everywhere in Latin and in a uniform way since many centuries and there was practically no participation of the people who were just viewers and observers. Michael Amaladoss S. J. writes in this number on the renewal of the liturgy. Liturgy in local languages and active participation of the people were the immediate effects of the Council. The Council made a distinction between what is changeable and unchangeable in liturgy. According to the author, what is non-changeable in the Christian liturgy seems to be only two things, washing with water in Baptism and sharing a meal with eating and drinking in the sacrament of the Eucharist. In all other matters, changes are possible. Diversity in liturgical celebrations according to the temperaments, traditions and cultures of people are absolutely necessary, so that liturgy is connected to the life and context of the people. Unfortunately, instead of periodic revisions in liturgy according to the needs and cultures of people, it seems that more and more control from the centre is the trend today. It stifles the legitimate freedom of the Christian community, its creativity, and spontaneity in building up community and in celebrating faith in their own cultural and social context.

Mission and evangelization is one of the core themes of the Council touched by its many documents, especially by the Decree on Mission (*Ad Gentes*). It is a recurring topic in many of the Post-Conciliar

documents and Roman Synods. Antony Kalliath CMI highlights the contributions of the Council and the post-conciliar developments on mission. Discovery of the other Faiths and the new context of dialogue and relationship with them radically changed the traditional concept of mission. Mission cannot be understood today exclusively as proclamation, conversion, baptism and planting the Church. Evangelization and mission have to be understood today in the larger framework of God's universal plan of salvation where all peoples, religions and cultures have a positive role to play. According to the author, the overwhelming challenge that Church faces in today's global age is to reconstruct its identity through an incarnational insertion into the present pluralist, and dialogical scenario of religions as a 'power-point' in the network of reality. Jesus came to break the narrow boundaries of churches, religions, nationalities and cultures and to gather all in the 'Kingdom of God', of course respecting the identity of all peoples, religions and cultures. Unity is no more uniformity, but unity in diversity. The mission of the Church, according to the author, is to become the 'power point' (not the centre) in the network of world's religions so that Jesus' Gospel becomes a vital force to build up an interfaith community in the New Life Jesus has brought about.

What is most striking is that in spite of fifty years the Council's teachings are not yet fully "received" and appropriated by the whole Church. The Jubilee year is an opportunity to intensify the process of reception by the whole Church. What is more important is to complete the agenda of the Council and to take it further with the vision of the Council. The call to renewal has to be responded by actually undergoing the painful process of renewal and reform in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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Vatican II: Call for Renewal in the Church

Kuncheria Pathil

The Author, in the first part of this article, highlights the significant contributions of Vatican II in the area of ecclesiology, such as, the emphasis on the mystery of the Church, the rediscovery of the Church as the People of God and the role and mission of the laity, teaching on the Collegiality of the Bishops and the Synodal and Conciliar structure of the Church. In the second part he focuses on some of the new challenges the Church is facing today. The author is the Associate Editor of *Jeevadhara*, and the former President of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram Bangalore. At present he resides at Jeevadhara and he is the Director of Jeevadhara's Centre for Socio-Religious Research, recognized by the MG University, Kottayam.

The First Vatican Council was held in 1869-70, which defined the dogmas of Papal Primacy and Papal Infallibility. After the Council some predicted that there won't be another Ecumenical Council and remarked that an Ecumenical Council is unwanted as the Pope is infallible and he can take decisions alone. The remarks and opinions of these pessimists were dismissed by Pope John XXIII when he announced to convoke an Ecumenical Council in 1959 to the surprise of all, even many in the Roman Curia. Of course, it took almost 100 years after Vatican I. Pope John XXIII made a prophetic act in convoking the Council which was a unique event of the bursting out of the power of the Holy Spirit for the reform of the Church in its mission in the world. In this review article I would like to highlight some of the significant contributions of the Council in part one, and in the second part some of the challenges the Church face today.

PART I
Some Significant Contributions of the Council

Strictly speaking, the Vatican II was not an 'Ecumenical Council', as it excluded the other Churches as equal partners, and it was only a

Council of the Roman Catholic Church. But invitation was sent to all the other main line Churches to send official 'observers' to attend the Council and in fact about 150 observers from other Churches took part in the Council. Their presence and occasional interventions made present to the Council Fathers the rich heritage of the other Churches and reminded the Fathers of their ecumenical commitment. The Council was indeed an 'ecumenical event' and in fact many leaders of the other Churches called for similar renewal and reform in the other Churches along the model of Vatican II.

A Prophetic Call for Renewal in the Church

The Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 4-5) spoke about the radical changes in the world today and called for an explicit and conscious restatement of the self-understanding of the Church in the actual situation of today. The most radical change of today is that we have passed from a static concept of reality to a dynamic and evolutionary concept. It is a radical shift from the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrinal approach to a historical, relational and processive approach to reality, which calls for a new understanding of the Church, away from an absolute and dogmatic Church to a historically conditioned Church. The Council realized that the world is changing very fast and the Church is lagging behind. The changes in the socio-cultural, economic, political and technological realms will have inevitable impact on the religious, ethical, moral, theological and doctrinal areas. The Church was called to reform its ways of thinking, living, administrative structures and functioning, theological and doctrinal articulations and patterns of worship, and its moral and canonical codes.

Divine Mystery in Earthen Vessels

The most significant contribution of the Council to the theology of the Church is perhaps the *rediscovery of the mystery of the Church*, a rediscovery of the Biblical and Patristic spirit, which never dared to "define" the Church. The medieval theologians, on the other hand, made the Church into a 'perfect society' and visible institution with clear-cut definitions, regulations, structures and boundaries that the mystery aspect of the Church was lost to a great extent. The Church should not be seen primarily as a social reality, but it must be seen with the eyes of faith as

part of the mission of the Holy Trinity, God's plan of salvation realized in history. *Lumen Gentium* chapter one elaborates this mystery aspect of the Church. The Church has its origin in the plan of the Father; this plan became realized in history in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.[1] The Church is God's sacrament and instrument for the salvation of the whole humanity. As in the mystery of Christ divine and human natures are united in the one person, so is the mystery of the Church where it is united to Christ as his own Body. This mystery of the Church is presented in the New Testament by various imageries like the *Body of Christ, the People of God, the Bride of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Flock of Christ* and so on. The variety of these imageries in the New Testament points to the inexhaustible richness of the reality of the Church. Each one of these imageries or models enlightens some particular aspect of the mystery of the Church. No one image or model of the Church is absolute or definitive or exhaustive. If we take seriously this mystery aspect of the Church, we cannot be so juridical and triumphalistic in defining the boundaries of the Church. The Council in fact acknowledged that the mystery of the Church transcends the Catholic Church and is present in the other Churches too, though all the Churches may not be faithful to the mystery of Christ in the same way. At the same time this divine mystery of the Church takes concrete shape in historical, socio-cultural and institutional realities. Therefore, we have to take seriously the external, historical, visible and institutional elements of the Church which have a sacramental character. In reforming these visible, historical and institutional elements, we have to be very careful, and we shall not throw the baby with bath water.

Church as the People of God

A new understanding of the Church as "the people of God" is another major change made by Vatican II. The mystery of the Church takes concrete form in a historical, human community. God's plan of Salvation is the gathering together of humanity into one community or one family, a process initiated in the call of Israel to which momentum and a new direction was given in Jesus Christ, and in the call of "a new People of God". Gathering together a new people in the Church is not the end of

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1. *Lumen Gentium*, Nos. 2, 3, 4.

the Salvation History. It is a means to the end, which is the gathering of all people in the "Kingdom of God". In other words the Church as the people of God is a sign of the final unity of all humankind.

The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church has a full Chapter on the People of God and it is significantly placed before the chapter on the hierarchy; for the pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity, they all belong to the People of God and are equal as members of the People of God. This was the concept and practice of the Church in the New Testament. The Church was a community of brothers and sisters who enjoyed perfect equality and fraternity. Although the members of the community had different charisms and corresponding functions in the community, it did not mean any superiority or inferiority in the community. Although some people exercised an overall leadership in the community, it only meant a call "to serve" the community (Mt. 18:15-20). The Council reasserted the dignity and equality of the entire people of God and elaborated their priestly, prophetic and pastoral roles and responsibilities both in the Church and in the world. The entire people of God are priestly people. In the Christian community, properly speaking, there are no `priests' but only `ministers' or `pastors'. Every Christian is a priest in the real sense that he/she can him/herself stand before God and address Him as Father (*Abba*) without any intermediary. All Christians also exercise the prophetic ministry of Christ and that of the Church and its basis is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to them as well as the different charisms of the Spirit. It challenges the authoritarianism of the hierarchy of the Church who claims to be the exclusive channel of the working of the Spirit. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit is residing in the community of Christians as a whole and the community's 'sense of faith' (*sensus fidei*) is the real basis for the infallibility of the Church.[2]

The rediscovery of the concept of the Church as the People of God has in fact transformed and enriched the Church's life. The laity began to find out their role and mission in the Church. People began to realize that theirs is the Church and that they are the Church. The result is the emergence of people's Churches and Basic Christian Communities and other new models of Churches.

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2. *Lumen Gentium*, No.12

Mission of the Laity

According to the New Testament the last word of authority is entrusted to the whole community.[3] The Holy Spirit who resides in the whole community is the theological foundation for the authority in the Church. It is not a denial of the special role of the Apostles and their successors in the Church. They are first and foremost the spokespersons of the community, who speak authoritatively for the community and in the name of the community. Of course, they have the special charism of the Spirit for discernment and leadership, and they do play a sacramental role in making Christ's presence and action in the community. This basic understanding of the communal nature of the Church and its functioning is the background for understanding the role of the laity in the Church.

The laity in the Church has come of age and there seems to be all on a sudden an awakening of the laity, which is manifested in the several movements, ministries, organizations and publications by the laity. This phenomenon is a sign of hope for the Church in the third millennium. It was for the first time that an Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church pointed out and theologically explained that the laity has a specific mission in the Church. Along with the Bishops, Priests, and Religious, the laity has co-responsibility in the Church and in its mission in the world. The new code of canons both Latin (1983) and Oriental (1990) tried to spell out the role of the laity in the Church in a more positive way.[4]

Rediscovery of the Local Churches

In the pre-Vatican II period the emphasis was on the Universal Church and its unity and uniformity under the Papacy at the expense of the legitimate diversity of the Local Churches and their rightful autonomy. The Universal Church was conceived as one entity, one institution, a pyramidal system and structure, and the local Churches were conceived as its administrative units. Vatican II made a shift of emphasis to the

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3. Mt 18: 15-20

4. For a brief exposition on this in the Codes, see Varghese Koluthara, "Lay Christian Faithful in the Oriental Code", Anandarayar, "The Role of the Laity in the Three-fold Functions of the Church according to 1983 Code", in *Jeevadhara*, Vo. XXVI, No. 154 (1996), 307 – 322.

Local Churches, recognizing and endorsing their rich diversity and legitimate autonomy.

As successors of the Apostles, the Bishops are not only co-responsible for all the Churches, but as "heads of the local Churches" they have their own authority in the local Churches as "vicars and ambassadors of Christ. As the successors of the Apostles,[5] they are the principle of unity of the local Church, and *no local Church can be under any other local Church, but to be in communion with all other local Churches*. The Universal Church is fully present in the local Church; the local church is the microcosm of the whole church; it is the real Church in its original. Every local Church is the concrete manifestation and embodiment of the Universal Church and it is not merely a fraction or administrative unit of the Universal Church. The different local/ individual Churches have their legitimate autonomy enjoying their own traditions, liturgies, disciplines, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. [6] The unity among these diverse local churches is their "unity in faith and sacramental communion". They are "Catholic" by their communion with one another expressed in the communion of their bishops in the Episcopal College and with its head the Roman Pontiff.[7] The concept of the "One church in Many Churches" has tremendous potential for ecumenism or unity among the different Christian denominations. If unity is to be sought not in uniformity and amalgamation, but in faith and sacramental communion, opening up the possibility for a rich diversity of Churches or ecclesial types, we could solve the greatest obstacle to Christian Unity.

Episcopal Collegiality and the Synodal/ Conciliar Structure of the Church

Another very significant change made by Vatican II is its teaching on Episcopal Collegiality by which the Catholic Church made a radical shift from its traditional papal monarchical system. This is once again a rediscovery of the synodal and conciliar structure and system of the early Churches, which was preserved faithfully by all the Eastern

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5. *LG*, nos. 20 - 21.

6. *Decree on Ecumenism*, no. 14.

7. *Lumen Gentium*, Nos. 23, 26.

Churches. Following the example of Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) the meeting of Provincial Synods and Councils of the neighbouring Churches, whenever they discussed the common problems and issues, was a custom and practice during the second and third centuries. The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed to the great 'Ecumenical Councils', which met to deliberate on the Trinitarian and Christological controversies that plagued the Churches of the period. The ecumenical council of Nicaea (325 AD) stipulated that Provincial Councils should be held twice a year and thus in the East the Synodal system became a constitutive part of the Church's life. But as the Papal Primacy was more and more asserted and the centralization of the Church took place from the beginning of the second millennium, the Provincial Synods and Councils became superfluous as they were totally controlled by Rome.

What is in fact the Council's teaching on Episcopal Collegiality? Its basis is the dignity, legitimate authority and co-responsibility of the bishops as the successors of the Apostles. The authority of the bishops derives from the Apostles through the sacrament of Episcopal Ordination. The authority of the bishop is derived not from the Pope as in pyramidal ecclesiology of the Scholastics and of the medieval Church. The Bishops are no more seen as the executives or delegates of the Roman Pontiff. As the Apostles functioned as a team or college, to which was entrusted the whole authority in the Church (not contrary to the authority of the whole community, but as spokespersons of the community as well as representatives of Christ) and as Peter was the head of this Apostolic College, so also the bishops today, as successors of the apostles, form one College, the Episcopal College, with pope as its head. This Episcopal College has the supreme, universal and immediate authority in the Church and it can teach and define matters of faith and morals with infallibility. Naturally this teaching has an apparent conflict with the papal primacy and infallibility as defined by the first Vatican Council.

Ministry in the Church Prophetic than Cultic

The new understanding of the Church as the 'People of God' made a radical shift in the understanding of ministry. The Church is no more conceived as a visible institution governed by a hierarchy but as a mystery, as the people of God, as a community of believers, as the Body of Christ,

where Christ alone is the Head. The community is prior to the hierarchy and ministers. Ministers are situated in the community in which they are performing certain functions. Ordained ministry is seen in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. Every member of the community participates in the three-fold mission and ministry of Christ, as prophet, priest and shepherd.[8] Ordained ministers do not have a monopoly of all ministries and they are not the exclusive channels of the spirit. Here the clerical view of the church gave way to an ecclesial view of ministry.[9] In the new understanding of the Church, those who are in authority in the Church are not to rule others; they do not possess any inherent, magical, ontological "power", but they are called to serve the other members of the Church. Ministries in the Church, whether ordained or not, are charisms and call to serve the community. Christ and His spirit reside in the Church, in the community. The sacramental character of ordained ministry clearly highlights its Christological, Pneumatological and ecclesial understanding and dismisses any inherent, ontological, magical power in the ordained minister.

The triple ministry, prophetic, priestly and shepherding are integral parts of one and the same mission and ministry of Jesus. In the triple ministry the central role is *the proclamation of the Word of God* which is explicitly the prophetic or teaching function.[10] The proclamation of the Word of God does not mean merely doctrinal teaching or communicating some ideas or catechesis. The Word of God transforms and recreates by its transforming and creative power. It does not mean that the priestly and shepherding (governing) functions are unimportant and secondary. These three functions are penetrating one another and become integrated into one mission. The same Word of God has also sanctifying and

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8 *LG*, 11, 12, 13.

9 Bp. Cyprian of Carthage is a typical example of a clerical view of the Church. For Cyprian there is no Church out side the Bishop. The Bishop is primary and prior to the Church. Episcopate is the principle of the unity of the Church. " ...the Bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the Bishop; and if anyone be not with the Bishop, that he is not in the Church.." (*Letter* 68). Of course, we can understand the view of Cyprian at a time when the unity of the Church was threatened under various schismatic and heretical Bishops. Cyprian appealed the people to stay with the legitimate Bishop in Apostolic succession.

10 *LG* 23; *Christus Dominus* 12; *Decree on Priestly Ministry* 4.

governing (gathering) function. The community is gathered, unified, sanctified and transformed by the power of the Word of God.[11] Proclamation of the Word of God leads to faith, which gathers, unifies, sanctifies and transforms the community. Therefore, conceiving priestly function in a narrow way as something cultic related to liturgies, rituals and sacraments is a much distorted view. The primary role of the ordained minister in the Church is definitely the proclamation of the Word of God.

New Ecumenical Openings

With the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church fully entered into the modern ecumenical movement. Many documents and statements of the Council, especially, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Decree on Ecumenism and the Decree on the Eastern Churches*, are clear indications of a radical change in the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the other Churches. From polemics, triumphalism and condemnation, the Church entered into a new period of mutual understanding and acceptance. The Council called the ancient Eastern Orthodox Churches as "Sister Churches" and the Reformation Churches as "Ecclesial Communities".

The ecumenical implications of the Council's shift in ecclesiology are very significant. The rediscovery and humble acknowledgement of the mystery of the Church helped the Church to accept the limitations of the institutions, structures, dogmas and rituals of the Church, and to acknowledge the presence of the mystery of the Church in other Churches and Christian communities. The shift from hierarchy to people is a call to overcome clericalism, which was prevalent in the Catholic Church against which the Reformation Churches revolted. The shift from Papal Primacy to the Collegiality of the bishops and the synodal structure and functioning of the Church is a timely ecumenical response to the Orthodox and other Eastern Churches who safeguarded and witnessed to the ancient ecclesial structures based on the biblical and patristic traditions. The shift of emphasis from the Universal to the Local corrects the over centralization of the Catholic Church and accepts the diversity of the Churches and their locality.

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11 *LG*, 25; *Christus Dominus* 11; *Decree on Priestly Ministry* 2, 4.

The Council of course did not grant same status to the Reformation Churches and other ecclesial communities, as the Reformation caused a substantial break from the traditions of the Catholic Church and there are very serious differences between them and the Catholic Church. But the council acknowledged that many significant "ecclesial elements" are present in those Christian communities, such as, the Word of God, life of grace, faith, hope and charity, some sacraments and so on.[12] Therefore, life of grace is available in these Churches and they are indeed also means of salvation to their members due to the salvific efficacy of Christ and His One Church.[13] The Council also made a passionate call for removing the obstacles to the perfect ecclesial communion among all the Churches so that all Christians may be gathered into one visible body and fellowship with common celebration of the Eucharist.

The Catholic Church has not yet accepted membership in the World Council of Churches. And yet, it takes an active part in the programmes and meetings of the WCC. Besides sending delegations regularly to all the Assemblies and important sessions of the WCC, the 'Joint Working Group' between the WCC and the Catholic Church conducts its regular meetings and promotes common study projects on several issues. The officially appointed theologians of the Catholic Church are members of the 'Faith and Order Commission', and they do play a significant role in the discussions and in the drafting of important ecumenical consensus documents. The Lima document on 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry' endorsed by the Faith and Order Commission and the WCC, published in 1982, was circulated to all the dioceses in the Catholic Church and various Episcopal Conferences or countries have responded to it.

Radical Change in the Approach to Other Religions

In the encounter of Christianity with other religions we could see three distinctively different stages: In the first stage Christianity considered other religions as a threat to its own existence and its absolute and universal claims. Here the approach to other religions was totally negative in terms of true religion vs. false religion. The second stage began with the modern period of history when all the religions were seriously studied by the

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12 *UR*, no. 3, 19; *LG*, no. 15; *Ut Unum Sint*, no, 64.
13. *UR*, no.3.

various sciences such as history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, phenomenology, philosophy and so on. Christianity had to acknowledge and accept the findings of these sciences. All religions were accepted as containing truths and human values and they had to be positively understood and not totally rejected. At this stage, other religions were considered to be simply human and natural, whereas Christianity claimed itself to be 'divinely revealed' or 'supernatural' and thus the fulfillment of all other religions. Today we are at a third stage. Religious pluralism has been established today not only as an irreversible historical fact but also as a theological principle. Christianity has begun to acknowledge and accept other religions as 'religions', as 'ways of salvation' to their believers. This seems to be the only honest and open approach to other religions. If the entire humankind is God's creation and it has one and the same destiny, and if God wants to save all people, we have to admit that God's 'effective will' penetrates the whole human history, all peoples, cultures and religions, that all religions are activated by the saving spirit of God and that they have a salvific role.

The second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church teaches that salvation is available to all those who strive to do the will of God 'as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience'.[14] The Council's 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions' admits that all religions ' reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men, and exhorts the members of the church to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods' in other religions.[15] Today the theological question is no more whether the believers of other faiths are saved or not, but how are they saved. Here we find both 'Christocentric' and 'Theocentric' schools among Christian theologians with different interpretations. According to some, in this economy of salvation everybody is saved in and through Jesus Christ, and the saving grace is 'Christic', whether it is inside the Church or outside it. For others God's saving action is not limited to Jesus Christ. There may be other saviours and events in and through which God offers saving grace.

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14. *Lumen Gentium*, No. 16.
15. *Nostra Aetate*, No. 2.

From Ecclesiocentrism to the World and the Kingdom of God

Jesus preached the 'Kingdom of God' and what came into existence was the Church. In the past the Church had very often identified itself with the 'Kingdom of God', the redeemed humanity, which is the final destiny of the entire humankind. Thus salvation was restricted within the boundaries of the Church and the mission of the Church was conceived as purely spiritual and otherworldly by converting all people into the Church and thus saving them. A world-denying and self-centred Church was the result.

Perhaps the most revolutionary change the Council made was the shift from the Church to the world and the Kingdom of God. It must be pointed out here that behind all the changes the Council made one must acknowledge the pioneering and ground-breaking thinking and theological works of hundreds of theologians and scholars of the modern and contemporary period. It was they who have prepared the ground, laid the foundation and led the Church to new directions and horizons.

The Council strongly affirmed the presence and action of God and of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the world, which God so much loved and for which He sent his Son. The Church of Christ is for the sake of the World. The Church is sent to the world for the sake of the salvation of the world. The Church has to recognize the presence and action of God in the world by 'reading the signs of the times'. According to the Council, while acknowledging the autonomy of the temporal realities, the Church has to be committed to the transformation of the world and the creation of a new society. Our eternal salvation is very much bound up with our commitment to the renewal and liberation of socio-economic and political realities of the world. "Let there, then, be no such pernicious opposition between professional and social activity on the one hand and religious life on the other. The Christian who shirks his temporal duties shirks his duties towards his neighbour, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation".[16] It is the bounden duty of the Church to co-operate with all people of good will in building up authentic human communities on the basis of the Kingdom values.

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16. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 43.

The commitment of the Church to the world is the same as the commitment to the Kingdom of God. Vatican II clearly taught that the Church and the Kingdom cannot be fully identified. The Kingdom of God is a larger and all-inclusive reality, which has both existential and eschatological dimensions. According to the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament, the Kingdom of God is already here, but not yet fully realized. It will be fully realized only in the 'fullness of time' (*eschaton*). The Kingdom of God is a new society, a new creation, a fully transformed world, and it is the mission of the Church to prepare the way to the Kingdom in collaboration with all peoples, cultures and religions. Of course, the full realization of the Kingdom is eschatological and beyond history by the intervention of God alone.

PART II
Some Challenges to the Church Today

In Ecclesiology there is a technical term called "reception". It means that the decrees and decisions of an Ecumenical Council have to be "received" or accepted by the whole Church in order that they become valid. This "reception" can be either active or passive. When there is no explicit rejection by the Churches, naturally the reception is presupposed. In the history of the Church the decisions of some Ecumenical Councils were not "received" by the whole Church. For example, though the decisions of the famous two reunion Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1438) were approved by the councils, they were later rejected by the entire Orthodox Churches.

It may be asked whether the decisions and decrees of the Vatican II were "received" by the whole Church. None of the official Catholic Churches explicitly rejected it, though some smaller groups within the Catholic, led by Archbishop Lefebvre and others, explicitly rejected the Council as they found its teachings unorthodox, too radical, a deviation and mistake. Some high officials within the Roman Curia thought that the Council went too far, and some Roman and Papal documents after the Council, such as *Dominus Jesus*, seem to be a step backward from the Council's main trends in ecumenism and inter-religious relations.

In spite of the impulse given by the Council for a new ecclesiology based on the People of God concept and doctrine of Collegiality, no

significant change was effected in the institutional and personal power structure of the government of the Catholic Church. Apparently, the Church today in still functioning in a pre-Conciliar fashion as a Papal Monarchy, controlled by the Roman Curia. According to a saying, "Councils come to an end, Popes pass away, but Roman Curia goes on".[17] Of course, one must keep in mind at the same time that Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI in many of their statements reiterated the teachings of Vatican II and renewed their commitment to the teachings of the Council, especially, on ecumenism and inter- religious relations. But looking at the Church as a whole and its functioning in general, one gets the overall impression that many of the directions and orientations of the Council are not yet fully implemented. I would like to briefly highlight only six issues or challenges facing the Churches today:

1) The Council, in fact, rediscovered and revived the synodal and conciliar principles of the early Church by its teaching on Episcopal Collegiality, by the institution of the permanent Roman Synod, by the organization and functioning of the National and Regional Episcopal Conferences, by the diocesan pastoral councils etc. But the Church could not perhaps yet fully pull down completely the old pyramidal structures and the monarchical and dictatorial ways of functioning in the Church. The implementation of the Vatican II still remains an unfinished agenda. The Church has to develop and promote effective ways and means for the regular exercise of Collegiality and apply the principle of Collegiality at the various levels in the Church. The authority of the Roman Synod should be evolved into a juridical and democratic institution from the level of a mere consultative body. The authority of the Continental, Regional and National Episcopal Conferences should be reestablished as in the early Provincial Synods.

2) Although the Council gave emphasis to the Local Churches and called them to become really "local" by a process called 'ecclesiogenesis' or the Church being born or incarnate in a people with their socio-cultural identities, many Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America are still mere replicas of the Western or Eastern Churches. In the period immediately after Vatican II, there were a lot of discussions and initiatives

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17. Hans Kueng, *Infallible? An Enquiry*, London: Collins, 1977, p. 16.

for the 'inculturation' of Churches in their own local contexts and cultures. However many of such experimentations were banned from above or discouraged, and today there is an overall apathy and indifference in all the Churches on this question. Nobody wants to leave their comfortable zones and the Churches are reluctant to change. First of all, Local Churches should have their legitimate autonomy and freedom for creativity and decision-making, for which creative leadership and catechesis of the community is absolutely necessary. Secondly, the Churches must be fully engaged in civil space by their three-fold immersion or dialogue with the poor, with the cultures and religious traditions, in other words, a dialogue with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own.[18] It requires that the Churches should plunge into the world, undergoing a baptism into the realities of the world, rather than concentrating on themselves, their own members, structures, doctrines and their own specific theologies. The result of this process will be real authentic Local Churches, which will not be a replica of other Churches. Pluralism in the Church will assume new shapes and forms even within every Individual Church. Diversity is not something to be detested or forbidden, but something to the encouraged and promoted.

3) The thrust of the Council on Laity needs to be urgently implemented. Vatican II emphatically affirmed the fundamental equality of all the members of the Church in its presentation of the Church as the 'People of God'. All the members of the Church, both clergy and laity, participate in the mission and ministry of Christ as prophet, priest and king by virtue of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. It is their common prophetic call to witness to Christ and the Gospel by their life and witness, their priestly ministry of sanctifying the world in which they live and work, and their pastoral ministry of creating a better world where there is justice, peace and freedom for all. Vatican II thus highlighted the 'secular quality' of the mission and ministry of the laity. May be time has come now to delineate the ministries of the laity within the structures of the Church as well. Pope John Paul II proposed that the laity may be

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18. FABC I, Nos. 12, 1974,"General Assembly Statement", *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Rosales and Arevalo (Eds.), Manila: Claretian Publication, 1994.

commissioned "to exercise the ministry to the Word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion".[19]

We have to think also their role within the administrative structures of the Churches and in decision making bodies applying in a wider sense the principles of collegiality and co- responsibility. We should keep in mind that in the ancient Churches the representatives of the laity also took part in all the decision making bodies of Synods and Councils. In the early Churches decisions on matters of faith and morals were taken by the synods and councils at the regional, provincial and national levels. These synods and councils were participated by the local bishops, but not excluding members of lower clergy, religious and laity. Some of the earliest Ecumenical Councils were convened by the Roman Emperors, and in those councils some princes, abbots, monks and members of the laity played significant roles. In the early Churches we have many examples of lay persons who were eminent teachers, such as, Pantaenus, Origen, Tertullian and Justin. In the light of the People of God ecclesiology and the practice of the early Churches and that of the other Churches, a serious re-thinking is needed on the exercise of the role of the laity in the decision-making bodies of the Church, at the local, regional, national and universal levels. The provisions given in the Latin and Oriental Codes have to be critically studied. New legislation may be needed to give adequate representation to the laity in the decision-making bodies of the Church, including Ecumenical Councils, Roman Synod and other synods of the Churches.

In the New Testament we read that the Apostles entrusted the administration of the temporalities of the Church to the Deacons and spared themselves entirely for the preaching of the Word of God. As clericalism emerged in the Church, the higher clergy began to dominate and control everything in the Church including the administration of the temporalities of the Church. Today time has come that the clergy better leave the administration of the temporalities of the Church in the hands of the laity and spare themselves entirely for their priestly and prophetic ministry. In fact, the laity is much more competent for the administration of the temporalities. We look forward to that day when the laity will take their rightful place in the Church as fully involved members of the Church.

19. *Christifideles Laici*, no. 2.

Only then the Church will become really the *ecclesia*, the Assembly of the People.

4) The central idea in the ecclesiology of Vatican II is "communion". Churches have to become real fellowships today. If the Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal Churches are flourishing today, the reason is that they provide and promote fellowships at the local levels and make the Church a matter of experience. It seems that the Catholic Church has reduced the ecclesial communion to an extreme spiritual or institutional level. It gives more importance to spiritual communion in the sacraments and institutional unity under the Bishop. It should be noted that the communion has to be lived in every local Church, though it can never remain closed. The communion and community can exist at different levels, such as, Eucharistic community, Local Church, Individual Church, National Church, Universal Church etc at ecclesial level, and family, village, tribe or ethnic and linguistic community, region, state, nation and world-community etc at the social, cultural and political levels. At the theological level communion at any level will always remain imperfect, and therefore, it should remain dynamic and open to the other levels and oriented to the universal and eschatological. Communion implies and calls for participation. The hallmark of participatory communion in the Church is the participation of the laity in the being and mission of the Church.

5) Although the goal of "Communion of Churches" and "Conciliar Fellowship" are set before the ecumenical movement by the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the Churches have not moved an inch on their journey towards this goal. Mutual recognition of the Churches and Intercommunion still remain as ecumenical dreams. The basic problem in the Churches is their inability and apathy to change and to move forward. We have made beautiful and very significant theological statements and arrived at certain level of doctrinal consensus. Take for example, the ecumenical document of Baptism , Eucharist and Ministry, where the Churches arrived at a large area of consensus. But nothing really happens in the Churches. What is conspicuously lacking is commitment. No one Church is willing to make any change in its life and reluctant to move or to take any step forward. The result is that the ecumenical movement is infested with indifference, apathy and pessimism.

6) Perhaps, the greatest challenge before the Churches today is that they should move to the margins of the society and give hope to the marginalized groups. It is hopeful that many individuals and activist groups are active at the margins of the society. They organize shelters and movements for the orphans, mentally disabled, street boys, discriminated groups of women, ecological programmes for saving the earth, fight for human rights, legal protection to the discriminated groups and individuals etc. The Churches have to develop new forms of ministry and encourage and promote charismatic lay people in taking new forms of ministry. Priestly ministry in the Church should take its prophetic form, and the ministers in the Churches have to move from the four walls of the Churches to the world outside and give leadership to our lay people.

Conclusion

What is important is the general awareness that has been created by the Council that the Church in its concrete existence is a historical reality, subject to continuous change, and that it is not static, but dynamic. As the great theologian Karl Rahner pointed out, though Vatican II is a great event, full of blessing, it is still 'the beginning of a beginning for the Church on her way forward into the future'.[20] The process of change in the Church is, indeed, at a very slow pace, and there is a lot of resistance to change both on the part of the hierarchy and the common people. As Bishop Patrick D'Souza of Varanasi, India, pointed out, "In a sense the Council has yet to take place, and its spirit - a manifestation of the Breath of the Spirit - has yet to blow over the Christian communities at the grass-root level. Until the great insights of the Council are contextually translated into deeds at the level of the ordinary believers, of their struggles and hope, the Council will not have fully happened".[21]

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20 Herbert Vorgrimler, "Karl Rahner: The Theologian's Contribution" in *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpole, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986, pp.32 – 46.

21 Patrick D'Souza, "Vision of Vatican II and the hope that it generated", in *Yesu Krist Jayanti 2000*: Towards a New Society, edited by Paul Puthanangady, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2001, p. 113.

Merging of Borders
Pastoral Relationship of the Church to the World[1]

Felix Wilfred

Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World" envisioned a new understanding of "Pastoral" which means a new relationship with the world by Church's presence and engagement in the world. The author of this article, Felix Wilfred, highlights this vision and spells out five important principles of this approach, thirst for truth and Mystery, a positive orientation to the world, dialogue and participation, hierarchy of truths, and the importance of the poor as the point of reference. The author also specifies certain areas where the Church can learn from the world. Participation, justice, human rights, freedom and equality are the main keys here. Felix Wifred is at present the Director of Asian Centre for Cultural Studies at Chennai.

One of the greatest contributions of Vatican II has been to bring a radically new understanding of the relationship of the Church to the world, thanks to its document *Gaudium et Spes*. Concomitantly, the concept of the pastoral has also undergone a transformation. When we speak of the "*pastoral*" we generally think of liturgy, catechetics, care of the sick, and so on. *Gaudium et Spes*, known as the *Pastoral* Constitution of the Church in the Modern World has widened our understanding of the pastoral. It is not restricted to certain plans and activities within the ambit of the Church for the benefit of Christian communities. By pastoral is understood rather the presence of the Church

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in the world and its engagement with the various realms of life. As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II, it is proper that we recall the openness of the Council to the world and also its grand vision of the pastoral.

The Imperative of Vision

The pastoral is often viewed as a series of activities. It is important to realize that any concrete pastoral engagement needs to be inspired by a new vision that has come about in Vatican II on the relationship of the Church to the world. The very mention of the word "vision" may put off some people in the Church. There is, unfortunately, a lot of scepticism about vision. Frequently it gets equated with something impractical. And yet, Acts of the Apostles speaks of vision and dreams as the disciples set out into the world. Going into the world is connected with the coming of the Spirit. And the descent of the Spirit brings transformation by bringing in new visions and dreams. Quoting from the book of Joel, Peter interprets the event of Pentecost to the crowd, "Your young men shall see visions; and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

Now, there are two kinds of people in the Church for whom any discourse on vision may be unpalatable and even threatening: people of the "maintenance Church" and the "burned-out" people. Let me explain. Maintenance Church is a bureaucratic Church where business is as usual – meetings, committees, commissions, appointments, transfers, fund-raising, management, etc. For this kind of Church which repeats the same kind of activities routinely, vision is anathema. Then, there are the "burned out" people who, by the way, are to be found in every profession – among doctors, nurses, community workers, public servants and so on. To put it concretely in an hospital you will find nurses who are really angels brimming with love, care and concern for the patients. You will find in the same hospital also nurses who are irritable, unkind, and treating the patients as a lump of flesh with no human touch. Well, there can be in the Church also burned-out priests and religious, superiors and bishops.[2]

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2 Eugene Newman Joseph has done an excellent empirical study among the Indian clergy on burn out phenomenon, for his doctoral dissertation. For a summary, see his article, "Are the Indian Catholic Clergy Burned Out or Engaged?" in *Indian Theological Studies*, vol. XLVIII (2011), pp.62 -76.

They are people with strong resentments, frustration, disappointments and ultimately unhappy with themselves and a burden to everyone around. They are sceptical of ideals, and cynical about changes. Full of apathy, they lack in motivation, in inspiration, in energy. They just want to survive in the system, and if possible work out their career. For this kind of people too, vision and change could come across as challenges they do not want to face as it could unsettle them.

PART I
Three Temptations against Creative Pastoral Praxis

Many are the temptations that inhibit the forging of relationship with the world in the spirit of Vatican II. Here let me highlight three of these.

1. The Temptation of Golden age

This temptation consists in anchoring one's life in the past which is idealized and projected as the best that ever can be. It is the temptation to think that if something is old, it is the best; if something is old it is true. Everything is viewed and judged with reference to the past. For those people who fall into this temptation, anything present is but degeneration from the golden age. For them future makes no sense. If at all they see only queer foreboding of evil days, and are quick to forecast disasters. I am reminded of "*apres moi, le deluge*" – after me floods! – attributed to Louis XV, King of France.

To overcome this temptation we need to remind ourselves that God comes to us every moment anew, afresh and that we need to look forward to what God is bringing about in the world, in human history and listen attentively to the signs of the times. The Gospel of Jesus is oriented towards the future of the world, of life, of humanity. "Our Lord Christ said, 'I am the truth. He did not say I am the tradition' ". This is how the early Christian writer Tertullian expressed.[3] We should also be on our guard against the temptation to cover up truth with tradition. It is comfortable. In the Church, you can cover up the truth with convenient

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3. *"Dominuns noster Christus veritatem se, non consuetudinem cognominavit"* Tertullian, *De Virg. vel.* 1, 1.

invocation of canon law. At the early phase of Vatican II, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani exercised enormous influence. His Episcopal motto was *"semper idem"* – "always the same". He represented the establishment, the non-change. In a way, Vatican II could be interpreted as a breaching of the defence lines of tradition as embodied in *"semper idem"* and represented by Cardinal Ottaviani. If we are stuck with *"semper idem"* we may not feel the continuing advent of God in the life of the world.

2. The Temptation of Power and Careerism

Who can deny the play of politics within the Church? Appointment of bishops, transfer of priests and religious, election of major superiors – all these tend to be, unfortunately, politicized; become issues of power of individuals, groups, castes, etc. It creates an atmosphere that kills true pastoral vision for the people. "It is not easy to enter into the logic of the Gospel and to let go power and glory", the Pope said when speaking to the 22 newly created Cardinals on 19 February, 2012. Power-structures dissipate the energy and alienate us from real pastoral concerns. Power becomes an obsession and clouds our minds from burning pastoral issues.

I remember some years ago Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, who was then the Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, telling me that in the Church there should be something like a ban on career-enhancing transfer of bishops.[4] He meant to say that this will make them put their heart and soul into the diocese where they are, and not be tempted by the lure of career and expectation of promotions. We can interpret the words of the Pope "let go power and glory" as an invitation to attend to most important things that touch the people and not be taken away by personal agenda of power and career.

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4 Cardinal Gantin gave also an interview to the Italian journal *"30 Giorni"*, May, 1999, expressing the same view. His view was echoed by Cardinal Vincenzo Fagiolo in an article in *L'Osservatore Romano*. At that time, for example, out of 263 bishops of Italy, 133 were in a second diocese; some even in the third and one bishop (Salvatore De Giorgi) even in the sixth diocese! What Cardinals Gantin and Fagiolo said is not altogether a new proposal. We find already Pope Damasus in a letter dated 380 said something similar: "Do not allow someone to be transferred from one city to another, abandoning the people who have been entrusted to him, going to another Church because of ambition, contrary to what was established by our Fathers."

3. The Temptation of Hierarchical Thinking

Homo Hierarchicus – that is how Louis Dumont titled his major work on Indian caste.[5] People are placed *secundum sub et supra* – high and low. Some people are viewed as high and others low by way of birth, by social status, wealth, position, by gender. Gandhi was wondering how people could derive pleasure of having someone inferior to them and under them. We cannot reproduce this hierarchical thinking within the Church where we confess the equality of all as children of God; where we acknowledge the mystery of human beings, their dignity and their subjectivity. We should come to grip with these three temptations, so that our vision becomes clear.

PART II

Evolving a Pastoral Vision – Five Principles

How could we realize the grand pastoral vision of the Council today? How could the Church forge a close and mutually enriching relationship with the world? We could think of five major principles that should guide us.

1. The Thirst for Truth and for Mystery

Thirst is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. It is the precondition to savour the mystery of God, human beings and of the world. One does not understand them unless one experiences a thirst for these realities. This gets echoed in the words of Jesus, who on a clamorous feast day, stood up and said, "If any one thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (Jn 7:37). Those who do not have thirst do not go to him. The quest for truth makes persons and communities authentic. Allowing oneself to be taken hold of the larger realities of God's love, truth and grace nurtures life and makes it blossom.

The quest for truth is often accompanied by a sense of wonder that carries us beyond ourselves and our little worlds. The Ultimate mystery flashes like a lightning on our horizon, and our response cannot but be, simply an "Ah!" of wonderment. Pastoral starts when one begins to see

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5 Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1981 (2nd edition)

the flashes of divine light on the reality of history, and read it with passionate love for truth, goodness and beauty – *satyam, sivam, sundaram.*

What I am trying to say is that there should be a sense of mystery, an experience of mystique behind every pastoral engagement with the world. I have often heard people lamenting "we are only talking about social, social… and not really concerned about God and spirituality". Such misgivings sound naïve as they are imbued with dualism. It seems to place in opposition two sets of activities, one worldly and the other spiritual. It is precisely from this simplistic view the Council has liberated us, and has led us to see the world with new eyes, with a different spirit. That takes me to the next point.

2. Developing Right Orientation to the World

The pastoral approach to the world *Gaudium et Spes* provides us is one that is based on a sound theology of creation and a theology of incarnation. The pastoral relationship of the Church to the world is also based on the fact that both the Church and the world are concerned about human beings, human community and human activities.[6] This calls for coming of the Church and the world closer to each other and removing those barriers that hinder this encounter for common cause and engagement.

The Council overcomes a dangerous dichotomy and dualism (heaven and earth; this world and next world etc.) - resulting in *contemptus mundi* (contempt of the world) - by relating intimately the reality of the world with our faith. *Gaudium et Spes* does not speak of a *different world*, but of a *transformed world* as the future of humanity. The Kingdom of God is already taking shape here and now, a reason for us to be seriously engaged with history and realities of the world. It cautions against "pernicious opposition between professional and social activity one hand and religious life on the other". It then goes on to say, "The Christian who shirks his [*sic*] temporal duties shirks his duties towards his neighbour, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation".[7]

6. In fact, these three areas form respectively the first three chapters of *Gaudium et Spes*.

7. *Gaudium et Spes,* no. 43.

Such is the intimate bond the Church is called upon to cultivate with the world.

At the same time, the relationship of the Church to the world cannot be one of *theocracy*, namely the claim that the spiritual has predominance over the temporal which should be subjected to it (the spiritual). In fact, in mediaeval times the Church wanted to see the world subjected to it, and the civil authorities in service of it. Such a position was justified with reference to Scriptures. For example I Cor. 2:15 was quoted: *"Homo spiritualis iudicat omnia, et ipse a nemine iudicatur"* (the spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one); so also I Cor. 6:3 *"Angelus judicabimus; quanto magis secularia!"* (Do you not know we are to judge angels, how much more the secular things!).

Against this background we understand the Copernican revolution *Gaudium et Spes* effected. Human dignity, human community and human activity are things common both to the Church and the world. Hence the relationship to the world is not of domination over it or interference with its autonomy, but of dialogue and cooperation. As Cardinal Yves Congar notes, "The world in question is the totality of men's earthly activities and could be just as well called civilization or history...". [8] The fundamental pastoral of the Church is to insert itself into this human history, contribute to its transformation, especially by helping the world and history to discover the *eschata* or rather the ultimate meaning and goal of human activities. This process entails also the evolving of moral and ethical perspectives.

3. Dialogue and Participation

The dignity of human person so very central to Christian faith challenges the logic of domination and imposition. It recognizes that human beings are *subjects* endowed with understanding and freedom. Pastoral praxis should take seriously into account these fundamental realities. Hence it will be dialogical and participatory in nature; experiential and inductive in method. Dialogue is to be fostered not only within the Christian community but with the larger society and the wider world. It

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8   Yves Congar, in Herbrt Vorgrimler (Ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V, Burns & Oates. London, 1969, p. 211.

places the Church in a position of openness to what happens in the various spheres of the world. It helps the Church also realize that it has no ready made solutions to all the problems plaguing the world. Since human community and activities are a shared field of concern both for the Church and the world, continuous dialogue and interaction with the world needs to be fostered. For a Church still bearing a lot of traces of feudal culture of mediaeval times, this may prove difficult. It feels comfortable and safe when it can prescribe and command what is to be done. The Church could be tempted to bask in the privileges and glory of the past. But there is no substitute to dialogue and participation which is the way of the Gospel, to be reflected in every pastoral policy and practice.

4. Hierarchia veritatum – Hierarchy of Truths

What do we mean by this? Let me start with a practical example. When the Pope speaks to a group of Indian bishops on the pastoral issue of caste during their *ad limina* visit, this is not to be placed on the same level as when he addresses a team of football players. The former is something that touches the core of Christian faith which confesses the equality of all human beings and proscribes any exclusion or discrimination. It is a call to their important pastoral responsibility and concrete pastoral action. There are truths which are in close proximity with Christian faith, and those which are of a different order and at a different level. This is what led Vatican II to employ this expression in the context of ecumenism.[9] If every Church is to hold on tenaciously to everything it believes in the same way, it may close the door of dialogue and interaction with other Churches. The realization of a hierarchy of truths has helped a lot in the past decades as an important hermeneutical principle in ecumenical relationships.

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9 Cf. George H. Tavard, "Hierarchia Veritatum: A Preliminary Investigation", in *Theological Studies* 32 (1971), pp. 278 – 289; William Henn, "The Hierarchy of Truth. Twenty Yeats Later", in *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), pp. 439 – 471. One practical effect of "the hierarchy of truth" is the study document of the Joint Study Group (JWG) of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. See "The Notion of Hierarchy of Truths – An Ecumenical Interpretation. A Study Document Commissioned and Received by the Joint Working group, 1990", in William G. Rusch – J.Gros (Eds), *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation*, U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference, Washington D.C., 1998, pp. 561 – 571.

Hierarchy of truths, though was formulated in the context of ecumenism, has larger import and wider application. The relationship of the Church to the world, as we saw, is based on some of the basic convictions of Christian faith – creation, incarnation and the common tasks the Church and the world share for the future of the world and of humanity. In relating to the world and society, pastoral vision, plan and action need to be mindful of this fundamental truth. The presence of evil and sinfulness in the world with its many expressions do not cancel the basic positive orientation of our faith towards the world. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3: 16). If so, the Church should love the world as the creation of God and as the history of God's enfleshment and as the space of God's continued presence and action. When pastoral plan is not oriented with a positive approach to the world, it could turn out to be simply a moralizing falling on deaf ears, and carrying no practical import or weight. The amnesia of hierarchy of truths could precisely lead the Church to enter into trifles and loose its larger perspectives on the world deriving from our faith.

5. The Poor as the Point of Reference

The poor are the acid test for the validity of any pastoral praxis of the Church. The pastoral field is often so thick and crowded that one does not see the wood for the trees. Some small liturgical matters could be blown up as if this were *the* thing about our faith. Heated controversies could erupt about the rituals to be performed. It is at these times of alienation that we will do well to ask, "What does all this mean when we look at them from the perspective of the poor?" "What sense do these bitter controversies on liturgical and other matters in the Church make to those at the margins of the society?" Critical questions of this kind with the poor as the focal point of reference could bring a lot of sanity into our pastoral praxis. It will help us attend to first things first. When pastoral praxis blossoms in the spirit of Vatican II as the relationship of the Church to the world, especially the poor and the suffering, the futility of narcissism and naval-gazing will also be revealed. The focus on the poor in the pastoral praxis will make us automatically inculturated and rooted firmly on the ground in our pastoral plans and actions. The poor help us for the contextualization of the pastoral praxis. They tell us where our pastoral

priorities should lie, and where our energies are to be invested. If we do not listen to the poor, we will be alienated from the ground-realities and will become – to use a metaphor of Tagore – like Switzerland trying, as it were, to invest all its resource to build up a strong navy!

PART III
Pastoral Contribution of the Church
Five Specific Areas

Gaudium et Spes deliberated on some important areas in the life of the world – politics, economy, culture, war and peace. Probably for the first time in the history of the Church such reflections have taken place on the reality of the world, and indeed with a sense of solidarity and concern. Past fifty years have witnessed significant changes in the various realms on which *Gaudium et Spes* dwelt. But what is significant is that it has given us an example and a method to make this pastoral reflection a permanent feature in the life of the Church. Let me make some brief comments on some of the areas to which the pastoral of the Church needs to extend. [10]

1. Politics

There are three important reasons for the Church to concern itself with the political realm. Human beings are political animals, and politics pervades all realms of human life. The Church concerned about the wellbeing of human persons, community and common good cannot isolate itself from the political process. Secondly, the important policies and decisions affecting the life of the people are taken at the political level. Thirdly, the good of the society does not overlap with the goals of the state. Therefore, there is legitimate room for civil society and for its action. In other words, the political process is much larger than the state, and it involves the whole civil society as an important sphere for the pastoral involvement of the Church. When the policies and goals of the state do not respond to the good of the society, the civil society needs to step in. Many forces engaged in the welfare of the community meet at

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10. For detailed discussion, see Felix Wilfred, *Church's Role for Better India*. Keynote address delivered at the 11thGeneral Body Meeting of Catholic Council of India (CCI), Kochi, November 24- 27, 2011.

the level of civil society, and hence the need for the Church to be an active participant in this realm.

Looking back at the decades after Independence, it would appear that the Indian Church has been overly concerned with minority issues to become almost the only point of its political interventions. However, it was not so always. As a recent research has shown, in the pre-Independence period, the Christian community was involved in the political debates, policies, etc. Christians held different political views and positions and were engaged in national political issues.[11] Today, there are a number of political issues and questions about which the Church needs to concern itself as an integral part of its pastoral life and action.

2. Economy

Viewing the economic condition in the country, in their statement at the latest meeting of the CBCI, the bishops spoke of the "*betrayal of the poor*" and of "*disappointment*":

Economic development has brought about increasing inequities, and ever widening gap between the rich and the poor with consequent tensions spilling over into violence. We see around us a betrayal of the poor and marginalized, the tribals, dalits and other backward classes, women and other groups who live in dehumanizing and oppressive poverty. We witness rampant exploitation of children. There is disappointment with those in public life for whom ethical concerns matter little.[12]

Today in our country liberal economy is pursued to the advantage of the elites and the rich. Whether economy grows or in crisis, it is the poor who pay for it, as they are the ones at the receiving end. I am reminded of an African proverb: "Elephants fight, the grass is trampled upon; elephants make love, the grass is trampled upon".

When the expectations of the poor are not met, and when their deprivation relates to basic needs, owing to inequitable distribution of the

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11. Cf. Mary John, *Indian Catholic Christians and Nationalism*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2011 (This is a Ph.D. dissertation written under my guidance at the University of Madras).

12. Final Statement of the Catholic Bishop' Conference of India (CBCI), Bangalore, February, 2012.

goods of the earth, is it not the pastoral duty of the Church to intervene in favour of economic policies that would place the poor and marginalized at centre-stage? How could justice become a constitutive part of the proclamation of the Gospel – as the Synod on Justice tells us– when the Church does not contribute to an economy that is equitable and attentive to the poor? A lot could be derived for the pastoral action of the Church from *Gaudium et Spes*, particularly what it says on universal destiny of common goods.[13] There is a social mortgage and restraint on islands of wealth in the sea of poverty.

3. Culture

Under the influence of Darwinism and social evolutionism, people of the colonized world were viewed as primitives and lacking in culture which was the prerogative of the colonizers. That all people have cultures, and they have right for culture which is incommensurable was a unique contribution of Vatican II. In its very description of culture, pluralism is acknowledged and affirmed:

Culture necessarily has historical and social overtone, and the word "culture" often carries with it sociological and ethnological connotations; in this sense one can speak about plurality of cultures. For different styles of living and different scales of values originate in different ways of using things, of working and self-expression, of practising religion and of behaviour, of establishing laws and juridical institutions, of developing science and the arts and of cultivating beauty.[14]

Gaudium et Spes goes into the relationship of the Church to culture and studies what contribution it could make. Some of the issues it speaks about are conditioned by the situation of fifty years ago. We need to reflect in today's circumstances how Church could contribute to nurture and promote the culture of our peoples. The whole issue of culture cannot be reduced to inculturation which is rather a Church-centred process. Culture is not something static but dynamic. The crucial question today would be how the Church could interact with the various *cultural*

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13 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 69.
14 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 53.

processes taking place in the country, including new forms of cultural expression deriving from liberal economy and new modes of communication. This is an integral part of the pastoral relationship of the Church to the world. This is a vast area which needs a lot of study and preparation.

4. Peace-building

Contrary to our impressions, the world yearns for some great ideals and values. If it adores Mother Theresa, it is not simply the person of a holy woman; rather it is an expression of those values and ideals which the world feels need to be affirmed and practiced for the wellbeing of the world and of humanity, though it often fails in this. The same is true of Mandela. Let me quote from Bishop Tutu:

Nelson Mandela isn't exactly the greatest orator in the world. (That's between you and me. Don't let us tell him!) And yet the world is almost about to turn him into an idol. The world worships him. No, let's not use extravagant words. The world admires him. Why? The world admires him because the world says, 'This is what we think we ought to be, to be those who embody forgiveness, reconciliation, who embody goodness.[15]

Peace is a great ideal the world longs for. What is the response of the Church to caste and communal conflicts? Should we view our entire relationship with the society from the angle of minorities? There is the larger perspective of peace and reconciliation. After the Gujarat riots, there were a lot of activities, but not enough initiatives for healing, for overcoming hatred, feeling of revenge. More needs to be done in this line.

From revenge to reconciliation should be an important area for the pastoral involvement of the Church in the context of caste and communal conflicts in the country. For Indian society is a society of revenge, so graphically portrayed today in the TV serials and films. According to Rajmohan Gandhi revenge is epitomized in the great epic of

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15. Preface of Bishop Tutu to the volume, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* edt. By Raymond Helmick – Rodney L. Petersen, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia – London, 2001, pp. xii-xiii.16Cf. Rajmohan Gandhi, *Revenge and Reconciliation, Understanding South Asian History*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 1999.

Mahabharata.[16] It is a story of violence, conquest, hatred, revenge, punishment and bloodletting. This large body of literature reflecting the traditional Indian life and conception was profoundly challenged by the revolutionary approach to life and human co-existence, propagated by Gautama Buddha and his contemporary Mahavira. It is the advent of Buddhism and Jainism which tried to transform the tradition of revenge into a culture of mercy and compassion. It would appear, the transformation is yet to take place. What could the Church contribute to transform the society from revenge to reconciliation? The pastoral wisdom inspired by faith will seek justice with compassion. And that is the way, according to the Gospel, to conquer evil and not be overcome by it.[17]

5. Protection of Nature

The environmental destruction in the name of development has become a matter of serious concern, and it should be a part of the relationship of the Church to the world. This is a new field of pastoral involvement for the Church.[18] Unfortunately many in the Church are not yet attuned to this issue and its implications for the life of the world, especially of the poor. We know how in India, construction of dams, mining, deforestation, developmental projects have all contributed to environmental crisis. Nature is a gift of God and human beings are called to cultivate the earth. If so the duty of Christians is to nurture it and protect it. The destiny of nature and the poor are so tied together, that the defence of nature is in effect defence of the poor and vice-versa. Whether and to what extent do ecological concerns enter into Christian worship, its catechesis or faith-formation? The pastoral praxis in this sphere could so evolve as to give leadership in this pioneering field.

PART IV
What Can the Church Learn from the
World for Witnessing Pastoral Praxis

Gaudium et Spes speaks briefly about what the Church could learn from the world - from cultures, civilization, from the expertise in various

17. Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Prophetic Anger and Sapiential Compassion: Grappling with Evil Today", in *Concilium* 2009/1, pp. 27-38.
18. Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Prophetic Eco-theology: The Need of the Hour", in *Oriens Journal for Contextual Theology*, vol. 3 (2012), pp. 27-41.

disciplines – science, technology etc.[19] The sense of humility it inspires, the spirit of openness it advocates is more important than the things, Vatican II says, we could learn. Important is that it has opened a new chapter on learning from the world.

Fifty years have elapsed since the Council. The Church has changed; even more rapidly than the world. Today the learning of the Church from the world relates to some very sensitive areas. Space does not permit me to go into details here. Let me name with brief comments five lessons to be learnt by the Church from the world. They are not so much in the form of certain contents as some impulses and inspirations for the Church.

1. Transparency and Accountability

The poor do not have secrets. Secrecy has been the weapon of the powerful who have something to hide, something to cover up. Today in the world, there is a move towards greater transparency and accountability. Public servants, politicians, bureaucrats are taken to task for not being responsible; for being corrupt. All institutions today come under public scanner. The Church cannot claim blanket amnesty from being accountable, nor use the argument that it is a different type of society, meaning that accountability does not apply to it since it is a society of divine origin. That would be simply an ideological use of the lofty mystery of the Church. The growing awareness in the world about transparency and accountability is an invitation to the Church to learn from the world. This is important to create conditions for a credible pastoral praxis in the world.

2. The Yearning for Growing Participation.

What touches all is to be object of common deliberation. Progressively in all areas and spheres of life in the world, there is a conscious attempt to promote participation and joint responsibility. People do not want to be commanded, or to be simply objects of condescension. Fidelity to the Church is not to be measured by how many times and how obsequiously a person kisses the ring of the bishop. To think in this way is to live in medieval times and with feudal mentality which has not anything to do with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The relationship in the Church

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19. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* no. 44

is one of communion which cannot be fostered by feudal ways but through a sense of basic equality of all faithful, their participation, responsibility and mission.

3. The Thirst for Justice and Practice of Human Rights

We observe in the world the growth of a sharper sense of justice and of human rights. Innumerable groups and organizations in every part of the world, linked to each other, struggle to promote these ideals, most often in trying circumstances. This thirst for justice in the world offers a lot of lessons to the Church. It invites the Church to draw from the scriptures and from its rich resources and create a pastoral praxis oriented to the promotion of justice in different areas in the life of the world. It is also an invitation for critical self-examination about the practice of justice within the Church. Church has a lot to learn from the world for promotion of justice in the world as well as in its own life.

4. Greater Freedom of Expression

This is an integral part of human development. Today, the world challenges any violent suppression of free thinking and expression. There is, so to say, a *logophobia* - fear of thinking, discoursing. There is fear of thinking because it involves confronting oneself; consequently there is also fear to let others think which could be threatening. It can take extremely violent forms of suppression. In Cambodia, Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge despot, among his quixotic ways, did away with a lot of people wearing spectacles! For they are supposed to be thinking people and trouble-makers for the establishment. Authorities tend to shun anyone who thinks. As one church leader honestly expressed, "I do not want intelligent Vicar Foranes. They are a nuisance!" This only smacks of insecurity, and incapacity of the leadership to deal with thinking, with different views. Easiest way is to use one's authority to suppress them.

Today, wherever there is suppression of freedom, it is being challenged. Governance by diktat provokes resistance. Church can learn from the aspiration of freedom of expression in the world. Freedom is not the possession of anyone, but a God-given gift which the Church needs to respect and foster, and not suppress. No doctrine of faith can override God's fundamental gift of freedom.

5. The Cause of Women and Their Legitimate Place and Rights

It is a fact that many initiatives for the liberation of women came from secular streams. This continues to be so even today. The pastoral thought and praxis of the Church has to learn a lot from the secular world in this respect, and from women's movements. Scholars have observed that in the last few decades India has one of the strongest movements for the emancipation of women. What has the Church learnt from this secular reality? It may not be an exaggeration to say that in many respects the secular world has gone far ahead with the recognition of the dignity and rights of women than perhaps is the case with Christian communities.

One may think, after all there is so much of corruption and injustice in the world. Are we so bad in the Church? There is so much injustice in the world. Are we not better off in the Church? Are we not treating women better in the Church? I am not denying all these sentiments. But this should not lead to any "Holier than Thou" attitude. May be there is more corruption in the world; may be more injustice in the world. But the point is there are hundreds, thousands and lakhs of people who could demonstrate against corruption; make it into a public issue; challenge the people involved. Do we have such means and mechanisms in the Church for creating transparency and accountability, for greater freedom of expression, for the legitimate rights of women? What scope is there to stand up for justice and violation of human rights in the Church? Even if the ideals are wanting in the world, there is a whole move, upsurge on the part of the people. This probably is what is lacking in the Church.

Conclusion

In India we require today an enlightened approach to the pastoral praxis which would derive inspiration from Vatican II and its Constitution on Church in the Modern World. It is the larger reality of the world which should inspire the pastoral practice within the Church. The pastoral regarding sacraments and liturgy need to draw from the pastoral mission to the world. Similarly, the faith-formation (catechesis) of the communityneeds to focus on the pastoral reality of the world.

The pastoral vision we spoke about gets translated into practice through constant *dialogue* and *participation*, and through an inductive pastoral methodology – from experience, from things better known to less known. Pastoral does not get limited within the Church. It is the entire Christian community which is in a pastoral relationship to the world – a relationship constantly to be rethought and reformulated taking into account the changes taking place both in the Church and in the world.

The pastoral relationship of the Church to the world calls for leadership. In the immediate post-Vatican period, it appears that one of the important criteria for the choice of bishops was their openness to the world and their ability to dialogue with the world, and their leadership in renewing the Church. To what extent can this be said today of the appointment of Churchleaders? I need not comment on this. I think the facts today speak louder than words.

Max Weber distinguished three types of authority: The first one derives from inheritance and handed down from generation to generation as in the case of kings, chiefs, nobility, etc. The second one is dependent on legal titles derived from appointment, election, etc. The third type of authority is a *moral authority*. In this case a leader is respected not because of the position he or she holds, but because of the moral authority. The Church was so conscious about the importance of moral and spiritual authority for its pastors that during several centuries and almost till High Middle Ages, most bishops were monks, who represented spiritual authority. We could think of Pope Gregory the Great, a monk, who was also the architect of one of the great reform movements in the history of the Church. He also wrote the important work on "*Regula Pastoralis*".

At the time of Pope Pius VII, an ambassador told Cardinal Salvi, the then secretary of State that Napoleon is all out to destroy the Church. Well aware of the power-struggles within the Church itself and in the Roman Curia, Cardinal Salvi told the ambassador, "Your Excellency, please tell his Majesty that he is contemplating of something which even the prelates of the Roman Catholic Church for the past eighteen hundred years did not succeed to do – to destroy the Church!"!

Well, the recent events in Vatican (popularly known as "Vatileaks") and the betrayal of trust by the close collaborators of the Pope, prompted

him once again to state emphatically the truth of the mystery of the Church.

> The incidents of these days concerning the Curia and my co-workers have filled my heart with sorrow but have never obscured the firm certainty that, despite the human weakness, difficulties and trials, the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit and the Lord will never withhold his help to sustain her on her journey.[20]

Church, indeed, is a mystery, creation of the Spirit, and it lives by the power of the Spirit, not by the humans however high they may be in the Church and whatever be their human fallibility and sinfulness. It is our faith in the mystery of the Church which spurs us on to ever new avenues of pastoral engagement which is the duty of the entire Christian community in the spirit of Gaudium et Spes and Vatican II. It is with a lot of humility and trust in God who is present not only in the Church but also in the world that the Church will engage in a constructive relationship with the world for the wellbeing of humanity.

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20. At the General Audience on 30 May, 2012. For the text of his speech, see *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition), 6 June, 2012, p.18.

Renewing Patterns of Worship

Michael Amaladoss

Liturgical renewal was one of the vital concerns of the Second Vatican Council. The Council made the distinction between what is changeable and unchangeable in liturgy. According to the author, what is divinely instituted in the Christian liturgy seems to be only two things, washing with water in Baptism and sharing a meal with eating and drinking in the sacrament of the Eucharist. In all other matters, in principle, changes are possible. Diversity in liturgical celebrations according to the temperaments, traditions and cultures of people is absolutely necessary, so that liturgy is connected to the life and context of the people. Unfortunately, instead of periodic revisions in liturgy according to the needs and cultures of people, more and more control from the centre is the trend today. The author, Michael Amaladoss SJ, is at present the Director of Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions, Chennai.

Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council is a time to look both backward on what has been achieved and forward on what remains to be done. The Document on Worship, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) was the first to come out of the Council. In a way it points to the ambiguity in the interpretation and implementation of the Council. There was a liturgical movement before the Council, especially in France and Germany. The liturgical texts were translated in the local languages. While the celebrant continued to proclaim the readings and prayers in Latin, the people were following the vernacular text, and trying to unite themselves to what was happening in the liturgy. There were also suggestions about how the liturgy could be reformed to make it more meaningful for the people. For the people who were involved in this movement the Document of the Council came as a welcome answer. It not only allowed the use of the local languages in the liturgy; it also asked for a review of the rituals and texts so as to promote a full, active and conscious participation of the people in the liturgical celebrations. The texts were translated into the

various local languages in the world. The use of Latin practically disappeared, till recent efforts to revive its use in some European countries for some nostalgic groups. Attempts, even official ones, have been made to defend such nostalgia in the name of respecting tradition and orthodoxy. The rituals of the Eucharist and other sacraments were also revised, the effort being more to go back to the older tradition by removing later accretions. The major adaptation to modern times was to replace symbols with words. The Council did suggest the need to adapt the liturgy to the various cultures of the world. In this area a decade of comparative openness was followed by a closing of doors to any real change. While translations and some minor adaptations were allowed any real inculturated renewal was blocked. Fifty years after the Council we seem to be going backwards than forwards. As a matter fact what we need is not 'reform', but 'renewal'. So the hoped for results after the Council have not been realized and a lot of work remains to be done, though it is neither recognized nor encouraged by the authorities in the Church. I shall try to illustrate this assessment in the following pages. I shall, first of all, show the hopes raised by the Council. Then I shall briefly outline what has been achieved. Finally I shall point to what remains to be done in terms of perspectives and practices. My comments will be limited to my experience in India, though I think that they will be relevant to the world-wide Christian community. A call to "New Evangelization" underlines the fact that most young people in Euro-America are walking away from the Church. But no one seems to be worried about how irrelevant to life they find it.

I. Hopes Raised by the Council

The Council affirmed two basic principles of renewal. The first was "that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people... have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism." (SC 14) To make this possible a general restoration of the liturgy is encouraged.

For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These latter not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they

have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become less suitable. In this restoration both texts and rites should be drawn up so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify. The Christian people, as far as possible, should be able to understand them with ease and take part in them fully, actively, and as a community. (SC 21)

The last sentence adds the phrase 'as a community' to the principle laid down in SC 14. But the key point is the affirmation that the liturgy *not may but ought* to be changed. Exception is made only for elements that are divinely instituted. Looking at the sacramental rites, experts suggest that there are only two elements that can be considered to be of divine institution: washing with water for baptism and eating and drinking together for the Eucharist.[1] The use of bread and wine for latter is being disputed. All other elements have changed in the course of history. This offers a wide field for change. It will be clear to any superficial observer how little things have actually changed after the Council! The Council goes on to specify: "The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetitions. They should be within the people's power of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation." (SC 34) It is clear that too much commentary during the liturgy is a disservice.

The 'Norms for adapting the liturgy to the temperament and traditions of peoples' are even more interesting. The tendency is to encourage variety.

Even in the liturgy the Church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community. Rather does she respect and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations. Anything in these people's way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy, and, if possible preserves intact. She sometimes even admits such things into the liturgy itself, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit. (SC 37)

Let me note that the stress is on diversity and on the integration of appropriate elements from various cultures. It is affirmed that "provided

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1. My doctoral work was on this issue. See *Can Sacraments Change? Variable and Invariable Elements in Sacramental Rites.* (Bangalore: TPI, 1979)

that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, ... for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission countries." (SC 38) It is suggested that "in some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed, and this entails greater difficulties." (SC 40) It seems clear from the context that the 'more radical adaptation' goes beyond the 'substantial unity of the Roman rite'. As a matter of fact the Council had earlier made provision even for the emergence of new rites. While saying that the document concerns only the Roman rite, the "Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in future and to foster them in every way." (SC 4) Experts present at the Council suggest that by changing the phrase "existing" (*vigentes*) in an earlier draft to "recognized" (*agnitos*) the Council accepted the possibility of the emergence of new rites like Indian, African, Chinese, etc.[2] The competent authorities to make such changes are the Apostolic See, the Bishop (SC 22,1) and the Bishops' Conferences (SC 22,2; 40,1) The people do not figure anywhere in this scheme except as 'consumers', though an exception is made for 'experts' (SC 40,3).

Going by these provisions one could have expected a great flowering of rites in various cultural regions of the world, especially in Africa and Asia, keeping untouched only the symbolic actions of washing with water in baptism and eating and drinking together in the Eucharist. I need not point out that this has not happened.

II. The Limited Achievements

So hopes have been largely belied. The Roman rite, of course, was thoroughly restored, rather than renewed. The effort was not to focus on the ongoing present context and needs, but to go back to the original texts and cut out later accretions. It was a job more for historians than pastors. The lectionary has been thoroughly revised and systematized. This is welcome. The people get to listen to the major texts of scripture in a two-year cycle. There has been some attempts to restore the

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2. Cf. P.-M. Gy, O.P., "Situation historique de la Constitution", in *La liturgie après Vatican II*. Ed. By J.-P. Jossua and Y. Congar (Paris: Cerf, 1967), p. 116.

diaconate without much practical success. There is a little space for some gestures to indicate community participation, like the parents, God parents and others welcoming a child to be baptized. Sometimes words replaced symbols, as in the ceremony of marriage. At no stage were the 'People of God' directly involved in the restoration. Done by special committees in Rome it was offered for faithful translation into the world's languages. The translations had to be literal and approved by the Vatican – as if it had experts in all the world's languages. A protest regarding this by the Japanese bishops during the Asian Synod remained unheard. A recently revised English translation has betrayed an attempt to sacralize the Latin text and to make the translation so literal as to make it an obstacle rather than a help to understanding. The power for restoration has been centralized. The Bishops' Conferences are being largely ignored. While experimentation and change are still permitted on paper the process is so cumbersome that it discourages any creative effort. Since all the bishops are named by the Vatican and any consultative commissions are also nominated by it, participation in deliberation and decision making is more nominal and formal than real. A monochrome Latin rite therefore still persists in spite of the openness of the Council.

One ray of light in this dark picture is the permission granted to the Church in India to adopt Twelve Points to give an external Indian colour to the celebration of the Eucharist. [3] They concerned some postures and gestures like sitting on the ground, prostrations, *anjali hasta* or the holding together of palms, the use of Indian oil lamps, some *artis* or waving material like light, incense and flowers as gestures of honouring God, the celebrant and the community, the Bible and Jesus present in the Eucharistic elements. These provide an Indian atmosphere, while the main rite itself is not touched. An 'Indian' Eucharistic prayer was blocked from being officially presented to the Vatican by invoking a strange rule that the two-third majority required must take into account not only the Bishops present and voting, but even those who were not present. Another Eucharistic prayer sent for approval to the Vatican about 15 years later was never considered.

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3. See D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Towards Indigenization in the Liturgy*. (Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1975)

This 'Indian rite' was not without problems and critics. The Tribals and the Dalits claimed that it was Brahminical. This accusation is unfair. Leaving aside the Tribals for the moment, there is nothing Brahminical about the Twelve Points. What gives the impression of Brahminism are the Sanskrit chants that accompany some of the rituals. These chants are not part of the Twelve Points. I have celebrated the liturgy using Tamil chants. *Artis*, oil lamps and postures are used by all castes. On the other hand, the Twelve Points need not have been presented as 'Indian', allowing the Tribals to have their own adaptations. The twelve Points had been presented as experimental. This meant that there must have been an evaluation and revision after some years. But this was never done. On the contrary, in the face of increasing control and disapproval of any new efforts from the centre, there was an effort to preserve and defend what had already been approved. I have myself been critical of some of the Twelve Points, especially the *artis*, as making the liturgy too ritualistic.[4] In any case the 'Indian rite' is used only in a few places like the ashrams. Many bishops have not allowed all the Twelve Points in their dioceses. A few rituals like the *artis* at the end of the Eucharistic prayer are used during big celebrations to add an Indian colour to them. One welcome addition is the use of Indian dances, also in the Tribal areas, in the processions at the entrance and at the offertory.

Another positive development was in the area of music. Since the liturgy was in the local languages there was an amazing flowering of liturgical and devotional music in all the many languages of the country integrating indigenous musical systems and instruments. These new hymns also facilitated active and vocal participation by the people.

I should add that, while the Vatican has total control over the official sacramental rituals and their texts, the people have all the creative freedom they wish at the level of popular religiosity during special devotions and novenas, pilgrimages and village festivals. These make up for the poverty of the liturgical rites. Many pastors know to handle these judiciously in their effort to reach out to the people and satisfy their religious needs.

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4   "The Liturgy: Twenty Years after Vatican II", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 47 (1983) 231-239.

In the area of the Syro-Malabar rite the texts were translated into the local language, Malayalam. Some adaptations like facing the people during the Eucharistic celebrations were also made. Soon after the Council Cardinal Parekkatil developed an Indian form. I think that this has not survived. There has also been a dispute between those who wish to restore the ancient Chaldean rite in all its purity and others who wish to adapt it to modern conditions. These latter may be accused, not only of modernizing, but of Latinizing the rite. I think that the dispute continues.

III. Perspectives for the Future

What can we do to promote meaningful worship in the future? I shall not enter into the technicalities of dealing with the Vatican. It seems to be getting more difficult as years go by and we may be in for a difficult period. But that need not paralyze our dreams and our efforts to do what we can. Cultural diversity remains an important dimension even in an era of globalization. On the other hand we also have to take seriously the tension between tradition and the modernity of science, technology and the media and a certain secularization that seems to come with it, especially among the youth. I shall start with some general reflections before evoking some of the sacramental celebrations.

From the Vertical to the Horizontal

We tend to think of worship in a vertical mode as addressed to God. There is obviously an element of prayer, especially when we come to praise and thank God or to place before God our needs. But even this often happens in community settings. Worship is for life and not life for worship. Life is lived in community. Much of our rituals is centred around the life cycle which itself is set in the context of the mystery of Christ. So there is a vertical dimension set in a horizontal one. Baptism is the admission of a new member into the community of Church. In the process s/he becomes also a child of God. The Eucharist is a common meal through which we express our love for one another. In that process Jesus himself becomes our food, uniting us as his own body. While the prayer links the community to God, the celebration itself is a social one. At the moment there seems to be a dichotomy between these two dimensions. While the vertical dimension is observed in the Church, the social dimension is celebrated at home. It should be possible to celebrate most of these life-

cycle rituals at home, in which the vertical (spiritual) dimension is inserted into the social dimension. In the early Church even the Eucharist was celebrated in the houses. Today the Basic Communities may offer us an occasion to experience such home-celebrations. In the churches in Europe today, there is a small space for personal prayer, while the main church becomes the space for a social celebration. Such celebrations could very well happen in other social spaces like the home or other public place.

From the Priest to the People

Today our sacramental celebrations seem to centre round the priest and his special power. On the contrary, the community is the real agent of the celebration. The priest is a minister – that is, servant. He is officially recognized as such by the community and set apart in a way. But it is not to dominate, but to serve, to be a centre of communion. The liturgy is not a celebration of a priest in which the people are present as observers. It is the community that celebrates assisted by a priest. The priest prays and functions in the name of the community. He 'collects' and verbalizes the community's prayers. We need not either idealize the Church as a mysteric entity and attribute independent agency to it. Each Eucharistic community is a local church in communion with all other local churches, making up the universal communion of the Catholic Church. If the role of the priest is one of service then we can think of more people capable of doing this service: married people and women who play a role of coordinating leadership in the group. Even if the ministerial priesthood for married men and women is not an immediate possibility they can be given important social roles in the celebration. If the problem in the West is the lack of clergy, our problem is the huge crowds on a Sunday in which an experience of community is rather difficult. So the people should be offered other possibilities of celebrating together in smaller communities, reading the Bible and sharing their experiences, reflections and prayers. To facilitate this other types of ministers will be required. I have a feeling that the people will have no problem with this especially if they are natural leaders in the groups. The clergy could play a coordinating role in a larger territory. Celebration with bigger groups can be envisaged on important occasions. Even a parish then becomes a community of communities. Even today, an ordained minister is required only for the

sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Others can be delegated for other sacraments and sacramentals.

Being Creative

Even at the present moment, the Church is particular only about the central ritual action and the formula that accompanies it. There is a certain amount of freedom with regard to the artistic elements like music, décor, dress, symbols, etc. that enrich a celebration and make it local. There have been efforts at dramatizing the readings. I think that the celebrants – people and the priest – must feel a sense of freedom in handling even the official rituals and texts. They are not magical formulae that produce an automatic effect. They have no sacrality in themselves apart from the faith of the celebrants. Jesus in the Gospels often heals people by saying "Your faith has healed you." I think that this is true also of the sacraments. The rituals simply mediate a relationship between the people and between them and God. They have a triple level symbolic structure. If we take Baptism as an example: there is a level of rituals like washing and anointing; these rituals indicate, at the social level, the integration of an individual into a community of believers in Jesus Christ; at the mysteric level they indicate a rebirth as a child of God. The mystery is not directly indicated by the ritual but through the social event. A creativity at this level is possible because what matters is the collective intention of the community expressed symbolically and ritually. An understanding of this structure helps us to avoid a magical approach to the ritual and a slavish repetition. The question, of course, is how lively is our faith. We also seem to have a tendency to give more importance to the words of the Church than to the Word of God

In a letter to mark the 40th anniversary of the publication of the Second Vatican Council's document on the Liturgy, John Paul II wrote:

The liturgical renewal that has taken place in recent decades has shown that it is possible to combine a body of norms that assure the identity and decorum of the liturgy and leave room for the creativity and adaptation that enable it to correspond closely with the need to give expression to the respective situation and culture of the various regions.[5]

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5. *Spiritus et Sponsa* (Dec 4, 2003), 15.

Could we use this open policy as an occasion to push ahead in creative ways?

Around the Liturgy

In the past, in far flung parishes where the priest came around for celebrating the Eucharist rather rarely the people nourished their faith through para-liturgical celebrations, devotions and festivals. Starting with Roberto de Nobili the missionary policy, at least in Tamil Nadu, was to maintain the celebration of the sacraments in Latin, but respect and permit other socio-cultural practices even in a religious context like the life-cycle rituals, occasionally Christianizing them with a prayer or the sign of the cross. Such practice of popular religiosity is still alive. It is unfortunate that the post-Vatican liturgical renewal in India started at the top, with the Eucharist, and got stuck there. Nothing was done about the other sacraments and sacramentals. The sacraments cover only a few life-cycle rituals: birth/initiation and marriage. There are many other moments of life that require to be given a deeper meaning. Death is an important moment. Seasonal cycles are also important. There are other needs like blessing of a house or a field. All that we have today is a short prayer in a book of rituals. Such occasions can be elaborated in an Indian way since they are socially significant for the individuals or families concerned. Students may be interested in a special prayer before their exams. While clerics complain about secularization among the youth there has been no effort to know their needs and reach out to them.

Law or Freedom

There is an ongoing dialectic between law and freedom. It is said that people with power will not give it up willingly. Any real change must come from below. The Document on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council was itself the fruit of liturgical movements in Europe. It may be time now for the 'people of God' elsewhere in Africa and Asia to push for change. This may mean that people start taking initiatives at the level of popular religiosity which eventually have an impact also on the official liturgy. We see this happening in small communities and on special occasions. What is necessary is sympathetic encouragement and discernment, not stifling the sense of initiative and freedom.

IV. Creative Practice

A Ministry of Healing

If we read the Gospels we see that the main action of Jesus, besides talking about God, especially in parables, was to meet peoples' needs. He healed diseases and cast out devils. It is in this way that he showed God's love for them. Such healing action often provided occasions for preaching. People with health needs, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, will remain a constant in our world, among the rich and the poor. Our pilgrim centres are full of people who come looking for health. Charismatic prayer centres also attract crowds of people looking for healing. Gurus who promise some sort of inner peace through their meditative techniques are very popular. Priests who bless oils or otherwise have a reputation of curing illnesses are sought after. It is true that our sisters run many hospitals. But they look only after physical healing. This too becomes expensive in an age of technology. But the ministry of healing at the psychological and spiritual levels has not been much developed. The official liturgy is concerned only when people are seriously ill. In practice its sacrament of anointing for the sick caters to people who are at the point of death. We do have some people trained in counseling. But they help some elite groups like the educated. Here is an area in which a lot of work can be done.

The Church could develop holistic healing centres. Leaving advanced medicine to professional hospitals some basic techniques like naturopathy and energy healing can be promoted. Simple counseling can be offered. There can also be regular sessions of calming meditations or charismatic prayer to meet different groups and their needs. Silent, centering and contemplative prayer can also be promoted. We do have many retreat houses scattered across the country. But they tend to be overly 'spiritual' and elite. We could also explore techniques of conflict resolution which address specially intra-family conflicts between husband and wife, parents and children.

Healing services would involve individual and group prayer and singing, reading of the Bible, anointing, imposition of hands, sprinkling with holy water, offerings, worship rituals and pilgrimages. These could be structured. As happens today in charismatic prayer groups today lay

ministers too, men and women, can play an active role. Healing centres like this could cover a given geographical area and be attached to popular sanctuaries. Even in secularized countries like France the sanctuary of Lourdes does attract crowds even today. Pilgrimages seems to be popular with the youth.

Building Community

Two of the major rituals of the Church are reconciliation and the Eucharist. Both are community based. Unfortunately they have become clergy-centred. Their community dimension has to be rediscovered and celebrated.

Jesus presents God in the Gospels as a forgiving parent. He illustrates his teaching with the parable of the Prodigal Son. (Lk 15:11-32) He often heals through forgiveness of sins. (Lk 5:17-26) He tells his disciples that to receive forgiveness from God involves forgiving others. In the prayer "Our Father" he makes the disciples pray: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." (Lk 11:2-4) He suggests that reconciliation must precede the offering of gifts to God. (Mt 5:23-24) He asks his disciples to forgive without limits. (Mt 18:21-22) Forgiveness is a dimension of love. Loving one another involves forgiving one another. In the ancient Church the sacrament of reconciliation involved the expulsion of a pubic sinner from the community and later receiving him back when s/he has had a change of heart and made appropriate amendment. Somehow this became a private rite between the penitent and a priest. Most of our sins have a social dimension. If we have offended someone what we have to do is to ask forgiveness from the other and be reconciled, rather than rush to a priest. God forgives us through the other. We have to restore this social dimension to the sacrament of reconciliation. Contemporary community celebrations of reconciliation only provide a community atmosphere to what is essentially a private affair. In India today, conflicts between castes and groups in the community are not infrequent. What we need to do then is to promote public conflict resolution and reconciliation rather than receive private forgiveness from God. We can wonder whether God really forgives when there is no mutual forgiveness. In a situation of structural conflicts of all kinds in the economic, political, social and religious spheres reconciliation may have

to reach out beyond the Christian community and acquire structural dimensions. Many of the psychological illnesses are the consequence of unresolved conflicts, hurts and hatreds. Reconciliation then is closely linked to the process of healing mentioned in the above section. The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa headed by Bishop Desmond Tutu offers us a model of a ritual of forgiveness and restorative, rather than retributive, justice.[6]

The Eucharist is celebration of community. When a community expresses its mutual love in eating and drinking together in memory of Christ, Christ himself becomes bodily present in the food and drink that is shared. If community is divided then its Eucharist celebrates a falsehood. This is what Paul tells the Corinthians. (1 Cor 11:17-34) What happens now is that the community dimension is not an experience. The group may sing and pray together. But the focus of the ritual celebration is the minister. The people feel more like observers than participants. Each one encounters Jesus personally in communion. This situation must change. If the community is not really ready to forgive each other and be of one heart and mind – if it does not have the firm intention of at least trying for such a goal – that community does not have the right to celebrate the Eucharist. It is not a magical rite in which the minister pronounces a formula to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. We hear, for instance, about caste discriminations and other conflicts in some communities. Before celebrating the Eucharist such a group of people must engage in reconciliation and community building. Otherwise it will be an empty gesture. Such community building may be more important in the Indian context than the multiplication of *artis* and prostrations. The symbolic celebration will be more authentic if the people are able to share what they normally eat and drink at home: rice or chappati and some special drink like milk in the Indian context. What is important for the sacramental celebration is the symbolic action of sharing a meal or eating and drinking together as an experience of community, not what they eat and drink. Jesus took from the table what was there and shared it. Our communities should do the same. Bread and wine are rather easily available in India today. But still wine is not what most

6. Cf. Desmond M. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

people usually drink. The situation is more dramatic in some African countries where both wheat and wine have to be imported. Certainly Jesus would not have wanted this.[7]

Basic Ecclesial Communities, which come together for sharing, prayer and celebration is one way of building community. Since the Church and the sacraments have also a missionary role of reaching out to other believers to collaborate with them in building the Reign of God, BECs could open out to Basic Human Communities which includes also believers from other religions. Both BECs and BHCs could build community through collaborative involvement in liberative action, helping the poor and the oppressed. Reconciliation too can have a wider significance for the human community as such beyond the borders of the Church. In such situations the question of sharing worship would arise. Let me only indicate here, without elaborating the question, that a research seminar in India treating the question was favourable to it under certain conditions.[8]

Festivals

Festivals often relate to the seasonal cycle and involve the whole community. In many villages in Tamil Nadu, for instance, it used to be a village celebration in which members of other religions too participated. They manifested and reaffirmed community relationships. They were also expressive of the relationship of the humans with creation. Recent efforts to restrict the celebrations only to the Christian community have resulted in making them Churchy affairs around the priest. They become Church or even priest centred and not community or village centred. I think that the people should have the freedom to celebrate life. The Church should be involved without attempting to dominate. Festivals are also occasions for the manifestation of popular religiosity.[9] They are not merely sacred but secular events. Festivals and pilgrimages may have an anti-structural role in society, prophetically critical of existing power relations.

7.   Concerning the 'matter' of the Eucharist see René Luneau, "Une eucharistie sans pain et vin?" *Spiritus* 48 (1972) 3-11; M. Amaladoss, *Do Sacraments Change?* (Bangalore: TPI, 1979), pp.16-118; René Jaouen, :*L'eucharistie du mil. Langages d' un people, expressions de la foi.* (Paris: Karthala, 1995)

8.   Paul Puthanangady, *Sharing Worship. Communicatio in Sacris.* (Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1988).

This could be skillfully used by the Church for transforming society, especially if the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist are interwoven in the celebration.

Conclusion

In renewing worship what is crucial is the approach that we adopt. The present approach seems to be that we have a set of ready-made rituals prepared in a rootless atmosphere. All that we are forced to do is to translate literally the text, adapt the rites in the cultural context without touching the essentials and persuade people to participate. The central authority in the Church is the main agent of this process and the people are the beneficiaries. The experts they seek help from are primarily experts in past history. This is what has been happening. We Indians too are guilty of this. When the so called 'Indian rite' was developed, it was done by an expert committee which consisted of liturgists, some ashramites and a few experts in Indian ritual tradition. The People of God were not involved except as later 'consumers'. There was the suggestion that it was an experimental rite and would be revised after some experimentation. But this has never been done. The problem of course was that, in the meantime, the central authority was forbidding anything new and we had to defend the permissions that we had already got. There was no free atmosphere. The real attempt at renewal should have started from below. Except for Baptism and the Eucharist, which have been divinely instituted, the effort should have been to Christianize, appropriately purifying when necessary, the rituals which people live and celebrate. The people are the celebrants. The priests are only ministers. Even for Baptism (washing with water) and the Eucharist (sharing a meal) Jesus had chosen two symbolic actions that people everywhere have been and are practicing, but gave them a new meaning in the context of his own paschal mystery. This should be our approach in renewing all other rituals. We have not done so and present regulations do not allow us to do so. All that we can do is to make suggestions. But what we can further do is to skirt the

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9   Selva T. Raj and Corinne G. Dempsey (eds), *Popular Christianity in India. Riting Between the Lines.* Albany, NY: SUNY, 2002; M. Joseph Britto, *Festivals and Social Change.* Dindigul: Vaiharai, 2002.

strictly sacramental ritual and work on the surrounding rites that can contextualize them in some way. We should also promote non- sacramental rituals and celebrations. The impact of science, technology and the media is bound to bring about some sort of secularization. Our effort should be to help people find God in their lives and in their world. God and the Church should get into the life of the people rather wait for the people to come to the church-institution looking for God. This is certainly what God wants.

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Being Missional in the Meeting of Religions

Antony Kalliath

The advocacy of the paper is that the interfaith dialogue has grown into a faith coordinate so much so that it is now the vital platform for credible Christian praxis and the competitive ground of Church's identity in the present scenario of religious pluralism. It calls for an inclusive faith right in the secular space embodying the travails of the world. It demands some paradigm shifts in the self-understanding of the Church to be skilful and creative to do the mission among the world's religions. The author is presently the President of Indian Theological Association and the Director of Divyodaya, an Interreligious Centre at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Indisputably, the Second Vatican Council's call for *aggiornamento* (bringing-up-to-date) has revolutionized the Church in its self understanding as well as its apostolate over these past fifty years. The paradigmatic changes that the Council wanted to bring about in the Church were resolved by its call of the triple dialogue with the *World*, the *Laity* and *Religions*. An impassionate retrospective assessment on the unfolding of the Christian life since the Council would indeed reveal that the resolve to a proactive dialogue with the religions of the world has been the mother of all renewals happened over the post-Council years. Indeed it unsettled certain sacrosanct theological positions that the Church held dear for millennia. But at the same time it brought about a new creative space within to reconstruct its identity on the wider spectrum of religious pluralism as well as it opened a new challenging interfaith trajectory for its mission.

Though the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, turned out to be a mile stone in the history of Church's relationship with the religions of the World the historical background that gave birth to this document was of a limited scope. Its immediate context was to build up the bridges of understanding

with the Jews who underwent great suffering due to Holocaust. Church's denigration of the Jews prevented the Christians to voice against the racist anti-Semitism of the Nazis. Despite their unbelief in Christ they remained God's first-loved people and after all Christianity sprang from Judaism to which the Church had a spontaneous soft corner. The immediate concern of the Council Fathers to produce the Declaration was to mend the relations with Jews. It was in the course of deliberations that the Declaration acquired greater depth and breadth owing to the interventions of Asian, African and Latin American bishops. Indeed, the Post-Conciliar teachings had fostered the Council's initiative further, and broadened its vision towards building up of constructive relationship with other religions. The following teachings are an earnest follow up of the Council's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non- Christian Religions (1965): John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990); Documents of Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: *The Attitude of the Church Toward Followers of Other Religions* (1984)); *Dialogue and Mission,* (1984)*; Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991). Now all the more, the question of Church's relationship with other religions has become crucial in the present compelling religious pluralism on the one hand, and on the other hand the concerns of justice, violations of human rights, violence, war, terrorism which are often outsourced by perverted religious leaders and their mistaken interpretation of the Scriptures.

The world underwent enormous changes at a systemic level since the Second Vatican Council in various spheres of human life. The genre and genius of the present age has outstripped the presumptions of the Council in a considerable way. The modern media, market, mobility and informatics are mesmerising and metamorphosing the very style and substance of human life in terms of new challenges and opportunities. The volume of knowledge deluging today's discourses is bewildering and has no precedence in the history of mankind. Cultural and social networking, and economic collaborations embody immense potential with regard to new fecundations and syntheses among religions at the people's level and the promising thing is that these religious and cultural interactions are happening outside the writ of the religious orthodoxy. It seems that people have become 'adults' and are increasingly indulging 'explorative' and 'experimental' in their faith journey which crosses their religious

boundaries. Silently, they are taking the real lead role in the dialogue of religions in the sundries of life due to the compulsions of the present globalized scenarios and cross cultural and religious configurations.

Taking into account the claims and challenges of the present scenarios, the advocacy of this paper is figured out in the following way: First and foremost, the Christian mission is *existential*; it is not through the logic of exclusion but through a hermeneutics of inclusion 'here-now' that Christian identity is to be constructed since the whole edifice of Christianity is innately built in the continuing mystery of incarnation. Secondly, the Christian mission must be *processive* to take part in the *Missio Dei* since God is ever creative and innovative. The incarnation was not a thirty-three year experiment but the permanent mode of God's engagement with humankind. God continues to 'incarnate' in the post-Resurrection era through his Spirit in the travails of humanity and empowers and steers the history towards the final unveiling of the God. Thirdly Christian witness must be *missional* in nature rather than 'missionary' in its outfit. Being 'missional' means being open, and receptive to the Spirit that blows wherever it wills, and being obedient to *a-posteriori* revelations of the Spirit especially in a multi-religious scenario. Whereas being a missionary implies built-into a-priori policies and agenda and it is oft ridden with a 'donor-syndrome' of salvation. Hence such a posturing is prejudged and biased. In sum, to do a credible and competitive mission among world's religions we need to be 'existential', 'processive' and 'missional'. All these three profiles of Christian witness among religions are mutually supportive and interfaced, and demand some radical paradigm shifts in our self understanding. Before we enter these paradigm shifts, the underpinnings of the present ethos are delineated briefly followed by a discussion on the unfolding scenarios in the perspective of religious pluralism.

1. Contexts to Scenarios, Constants to Configurations

In the present global age, it is amazing to see contexts evolving into scenarios and 'constants' being replaced by configurations. Scenarios are layers of contexts or rather simultaneity of contexts, which leads to mutual interactions resulting to new integrations and intensities. The present generation has to learn the art and skill to live in a pluralistic and

heterogeneous social and cultural fabric. The age of ethnocentric, protective and exclusive contexts propped up by well-knit constructs and ideologies are bygone. Humanity has emphatically entered the era of confluences of uninhibited cultural flows and social movements which engender borderless scenarios. The present Globalization and media do their crucial and supportive roles in this process. Consequently, the era of 'constants' is replaced by the present times of synergistic fusion. Be it technology or science, or informatics and medicine, or art and architecture, or music and dance and what not, the talisman is fusion and synthesis. The autonomy of the particular and the local gets a new enhancement and opening through mutations and permutations resulting to a hybrid culture.

Moreover, the overarching macro narratives built upon grandiose *utopias* are discredited and taken over by the *topias* of interactive micro narratives. Ideologies have become obsolete and defunct in the age of informatics. The deluge of knowledge that is generated by the present Information Technology is so immense and multifaceted that the conventional frames and tools are outstripped to process and assess the tremendous influx of knowledge in today's discourses. Above all the volume and the speed in which new informatics happening is so enormous and incredible that our complacent theological discourses cannot catch up momentum and are losing the competitive edge. As J. Moltmann says, theology should not limp after reality; it should illumine the reality by displaying its future.

While figuring out the future course of theology we should proactively accept the truism that in the present borderless age, it is simply not viable to defend exclusive 'contexts' and 'constants'. We are living in an era of 'networking' of media, technology, dialogue and partnership. The metaphor of 'net' is competitive tool to discern the unfolding scenarios. A 'net' or a 'network' has no centres but only power-points (joints) that weave the reality in a web of correlation and mutual approximation. These 'power-points' are not like the exclusive and absolute centres of a circle, dictating and domineering. They have neither circumferences nor well guarded boundaries. They bring the reality into an interdependent and interactive harmony and reach out extensively to

the totality of reality through an organic relational epistemology and an inclusive equity. That way they become 'power points' (not centres) through correlation and coordination, and each power point is inviolable and indispensable for the integrity and integration of the 'network' for all are mutually dependent . Its identity is then constructed on interactive simultaneity, and corporate harmony, and it is built through an inclusive hermeneutics rather than exclusive notions of 'unicity' or 'uniqueness' of a centre. Its identity is ennobled through an existential ubiquity which springs up from within rather than being imposed through notional universals from outside. Moreover, each 'power point' in the net becomes 'powerful' through a dialogical surrender in humility to the immensity of 'network' of existence rather than through a domineering presence; its leadership is through a creative receptivity and an utter renunciation. Jesus' metaphors of 'salt' and 'leaven' are the most appropriate metaphors to discern the 'power' of these 'power-points'. They embody the dynamics of incarnational renunciation, which entails a radical insertion into today's ethos rather than being an outsider, or an onlooker. The metaphor of 'net' is more like a kaleidoscopic spectrum of mutations and permutations always undergoing transformations and transmutations giving excitement and ecstasies to human consciousness to continue its journey forward. It compels us then to be creative, innovative and open to the new revelations in our tryst with destiny.

The overwhelming challenge that Church faces in today's global age is to reconstruct its identity through an incarnational insertion into the present pluralist, and dialogical scenario of religions as a 'power-point' in the network of reality. The metaphors of 'rock' and 'key' which have long prejudiced our mission theory and praxis, have to have new translations and approximations through the allegory of a 'net' for the Church to be missional in today's world. Church has to learn the art and skill to be a 'power point' in the network of reality bridging and reconciling all people in the New Life that Jesus has brought about. This calls for a radical servanthood leadership which demands an embodied presence right in the midst of the occurrences of the world to empower the movement of history to the Reign of God along with other religious pursuits. This is the challenge and promise of mission of the Church in the dialogue of religions.

Updating our theology of mission and missionary praxis responsive to the signs of the times is the right way to revitalize our Christian life. For it is through mission that the Christian life becomes competitive and credible. The Church exists in virtue of its mission as the fire exists by burning. A theology which is not up-to-date is a false theology. What is needed is a radical recapturing of Jesus' praxis and its incarnational dynamics and its potential to engage in the mission among the religions of the world. Today, what we see is that other religions are showing greater confidence and acquiring better appeal in the 'market of religions', while Christianity, haunted by the 'sins of history' and burdened by the present day scandals and scams, is showing withdrawal tendencies and looks diffident, defensive and sometimes incompetent to take on issues both within and without . To phrase differently, the prophetic leadership of the church is losing its initiative and élan. What is needed is a deeper and greater incarnational immersion in the present ethos rather than mistakenly relying on exclusive and isolationist positions in the name of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is founded on orthopraxy which means right action 'here-now'! Some theological paradigm shifts are the urgency to transform the journey of Christianity vibrant in the present challenging scenarios.

2. Unfolding Scenarios and Configurations

2.1. *World Community, a Diaspora*!

The current massive demographic migrations owing to the compulsions of the Globalization are intrigued with profound interfaith concerns. In the present globalized world we find the scenario of growing importance of urbanization. People are migrating to cities and metropolis in huge numbers. Currently more than 50% of the world population live in the urbanized areas. It is estimated that the majority of world population will live in the urban centres and regions by the year 2050. By 2030, the world's urban population is expected to hit five billion. By 2100, an additional three-to-five billion people will live in cities. To meet this demand we may need the equivalent of one new city of one million people every week until 2050.

Urbanization is only one feature of the global phenomenon of migration. Today the world is on move massively. In 2005, about 191

million people - 3 percent of the world's population - were international migrants, according to UN estimates. Currently, the largest immigration flows are from Latin America and Asia into North America, and from Eastern Europe, the countries of the former Soviet Union, and North Africa into Northern and Western Europe. The Middle East draws migrants from Africa and Asia, and hosts millions of refugees from within the region. There is considerable migration within Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The reasons of migration are due to labour movement necessitated by the present globalized market and political and ethnic conflicts. The world community has become a Diaspora collective or an 'exodus' people. This demographic scenario has totally transformed the religious map. It instigates 'clash of civilizations' as well as brings about 'dialogue of civilizations'. The people who migrate bring along their religious traditions and cultural leanings. On the one hand the estrangement from the sources, and on the other hand search for survival in the new context force people to be obsessive and ethnocentric toward their faith and identity due to uncertain and fluid situations. Positively, this new scenario offers them the opportunity to incorporate their faith into a different socio-religious context leading to revisit their faith and make to it competent and credible so that they can live up to the demands of the new situation. Thus Diaspora scenario turns out a breeding ground of inter-faith religiousness.

The plight of the marginalized and primal people in the globalized world calls for our special attention. It is estimated that the strength of this group is about 300 million, and they are distributed in Africa, Australia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Siberia, or the many tribes of North and South American Indians. Primal peoples live in harmony with nature, and their religious consciousness is earth-bound and is associated with plants, hills, rivers, mountains etc. They retain their stories which are assigned to geographical locations on the earth. 'Land' is the matrix of their religiousness. Their life and religions which are embedded in environment are endangered today when MNCs take away their lands in the name of mega projects and infrastructure developments. Then they do not only become displaced, but also become rootless people without a future or a lineage. The Christian mission among primal and indigenous peoples must include the concerns of their religious legacy and rights and

see their equitable participation in the dialogue of religions so that primal insights are honoured, and upheld. The critical contribution of the primal religions will be in the ongoing discourses of ecology and earth centred religiosity and will bring about new insights and imagination for a comprehensive meeting of religions.

The demographic movements on various accounts are thus making the whole world multi- religious and multi-cultural. In the global age, religious pluralism is no more an academic issue but a vital concern of their sundries of the day to day life. The neighbourhood and the workplace embody a multi-faith character and content. The exclusive religious enclaves of yesterdays are replaced by multi-religious communes. It calls for a new religious awareness of social amity and cultural integration in the neighbourhood fellowship. Religions can no longer be complacent in their isolationist domains and in their normativity. They are made interact with each other, and are mutually interrogated in the present social democracy, and thus it compels them to construct an inclusive identity for the national integration and global peace.

2.2. New Religious Hybrids

The modern media and information technology is engendering a vital cyber space for meeting of religion. Its scope looks vast and unfathomable, and people, especially young minds are now exposed to the world of religions unconstrained. They make independent assessment without being prejudiced by the religious leaders. Cyber space has become a competitive inter-religious site where an interfaith religiosity is silently and surely being brewed independent of religious Orthodoxy. Only the future will tell its far-reaching impact on the unfolding of a new religiosity. As of now there are thousands of websites where groups and individuals competing and propagating their religion in the virtual space which has almost become a 'mall of religions'. Moreover, the websites for interreligious dialogue and mutual cooperation are also abundant. This scenario is very influential, especially among the youngsters who, unlike the former generations, are more self-confident, adventurous and indulge in independent decisions in their religious matters. Thus the increased exposures and acquaintance with religions other than theirs enthuse them to explore and experiment other faiths. Thus they become new hybrids of multiple faiths. This multiple belonging has been commonplace in Asia

where people have the art and skill of sustaining allegiance to many religions simultaneously. Belonging to Confucianism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Shamanism, and Christianity at the same is a cultural and religious feature in North Eastern Asian countries. Nowadays the communes of contemplatives in West (whose inspiration is people like Swami Abhishiktananda, Bede Griffiths and others who have experimented a multi-faith religiosity in their pilgrimage in the Hindu world) and also in India, Tibet, Japan, Taiwan and other countries entertain this double or multiple belonging as a spiritual path. They are not bothered about the doctrinal strictures and constraints implied in such practices. Nowadays Christians practice naively yoga and Zen without any qualms and finding no contradiction with his or her Christian faith. Scholars like Raimon Panikkar are of the opinion that this multiple belonging will help the Christians to enhance and deepen their faith in Christ. Swami Abhishiktananda claims that Upanishadic *advaita* (nondualism) has been his veritable path to enter deep into the Christic mystery. These developments toward multiple belonging are aberrations for some, but some others look at them as creative unfolding of a new religious consciousness which will foster greater amity and unity among people. The time is not yet ripe to make judgement on these interfaith adventures. Nevertheless no one can arrest this development because people have now become autonomous and are ready to risk experiment their religious seeking. Wilfred Cantwell Smith foresaw the meeting of religions into a "common religious history" of humankind when the boundaries segregating of religious communities become porous and dissolved.

This trend of boldly accepting a multi-religious culture is expanding to various segments of human life. In all the churches, interfaith dialogue has already become an indispensable ministry. The World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue play a leading role in this regard. Proliferation of international Interfaith organizations like "Parliament of the World's Religions", enable the meeting of religions on wider and inclusive platforms and thousands of people participate in the ventures these organizations take up. Coming to the academic field, many of the Western as well American Universities insist a module on interreligious Dialogue in the curriculum; month long exposure programmes

in Asian countries is oft included in it. Again, interfaith insights are often sought by international organizations like UNO, World Bank while making policies on global concerns like war, poverty, ecological crisis, endemic poverty, AID pandemic, etc. Above all interfaith movements are making positive incursions into personal and family lives. Interfaith marriages are on rise. In a survey it is revealed 61% of men surveyed favour inter-caste marriage whereas it is 41% in the case women; 60% want partners from outside their community. Conducting interfaith prayer services during social or cultural occasions is the vogue of the day. Indisputably, the ethos and pathos of the present global age has become irreversibly interfaith.

Globalization, urbanization, migration, advent of cyber space have engendered versatile and proactive scenarios for inter-faith dialogue. The frame in which the Second Vatican Council figured out the question of mission among religions was of a limited interaction between a Christian and non-Christian world. Now the spectrum of Inter-faith relations is global and multifaceted and is replete with vital questions of peace, justice and human rights and is also ridden with new responsibilities of taking on violence, terrorism, war which are mistakenly justified in the name of 'Jihad', 'DharmaYudh' or 'Crusade'. First of all the Church has to boldly recognize and appreciate the reality of 'many-ness' of religions in a proactive frame that God willed it. Church should not see it as a problem but a vital path to take on the various concerns of peace, justice, human rights, ecology that the humankind face today. Also, the Church must see the religious pluralism as a challenging platform to prove the competency and inviolability of the Gospel to address today's concerns. In his apostolic letter establishing the Pontifical Council for "new Evangelization", Pope Benedict cites "the social changes…. that have profoundly altered our way of looking at the world" such as "the many advances in science and technology, the expanding possibilities with regard to life and individual freedom, the profound changes in the economic sphere, and the mixing of races and cultures caused by global- scale migration and an increasing interdependence of peoples." It is seen more as an opportunity rather than a threat to revitalize the Christian witness in the present discourses of 'New Evangelization" (not re-evangelization) which entails

paradigmatic shifts in our *apriori* presumptions and identity constructs. In this context mission among religions will turn out resourceful, and will hopefully incite creative imagination in the agenda of the New Evangelization.

3. Theological Shifts

The whole question of mission among religions will zero in on the praxis of 'dialogue'. But often we forget the home work of this ministry. We take it for granted. That's why the meaning of interreligious dialogue has not yet filtered into the rank and file of the Church. It still remains in academic confines, and it still has to take deep roots in our theology and spirituality. To be truly dialogical in our missional witnessing, first and foremost, we have to restructure our presumptions which will then entail a deconstruction of our dearly held sacrosanct stances. The following three theological shifts in our identity reconstruction may, hopefully make us more credible and skilful in the inter-faith mission.

3.1. Normative to Narrative

Dialogue should lead us to 'understanding' rather than agreement or disagreement. Such an understanding embodies both agreement and disagreement; it is more an experiential wisdom rather than logical knowledge; it is a celebration in which a mutual surrendering is the core and crux while the Divine manifests in a dialogical process. We are 'caught' by the truth rather than we are 'taught' about the truth in the meeting of religions. In an interfaith context such an 'understanding' can be held and sustained in a narrative faith rather than in a normative construct. Our theology, by and large, fosters the idea of God as a speculative concept free of figurative imagination. This path of theologization has eclipsed the narrativity of biblical tradition. The religious literature is, by and large, a narrative rather than a philosophical treatise. For only a narrative can be versatile to embody and convey the divine revelation which cannot but be paradoxical in nature. The Bible is not a monolithic conceptual discourse but a vast narrative canvass of multivalent and ambivalent discourses and themes. What prevails in the Bible is a story culture in which the history is transformed into a symbolic narrative; historical incidents are interpreted providential on the revelatory spectrum.

Above all, Jesus was a great story teller; he recounted his story through the stories of people. In this regard, the first Asian Mission Congress (2006) was seminal and insightful in its call of 'Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia" as a new path of witnessing Jesus among the Asian religions, especially when a story culture profoundly prevails in the religious world of Asia. All the Gospels were written in the Mediterranean context responding to the contemporary concerns and claims. Now what is needed is an 'Asian Gospel' to prolong the Jesus message in the Asian milieu. Then mission among Asian religions must be a 'retelling of Jesus' story through the stories of Asia" so that the Asians can ingeniously be invited to take part in Jesus vision and his salvific message.

In this context it is enlightening to know the advice that Mahatma Gandhi gave to Christian missionaries while they visited him. "Let your life speak to us, even as the rose needs no speech, but simply spreads its perfume. Even the blind who do not see the rose perceive its fragrance. That is the secret of the gospel of rose. But the Gospel that Jesus preached is much more subtle and fragrant than the gospel of the rose. ... Let us think of the bulk of your people who spread the perfume of their lives; that is to me the sole criterion. All I want them to do is to live Christian lives, not to annotate them. I have come to this view after laborious and prayerful search". What is needed in Asia is 'Christophany' through our stories of life than Christology of abstract notions . God the Father is revealing his Son outside "flesh and blood" through Asian 'Cyruses' like Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda. Recently a Hindu Tamil nurse has told me ecstatically that she is a great fan of Jesus Christ! People encounter the Risen Christ in manifold ways and the economy of the Spirit, the Father reveals his Son in multiple means; the Risen One is unbound and is no more a private revelation or an individual possession of Christians. He is the patrimony of the whole humanity and he belongs to the whole humanity. Our Christian mission among the religions entails us to 're-cognize' the face of the Risen Christ being manifested through our Asian brothers and sisters whom we encounter in our Asian journey. It is in this context that our faith and Christian life has to become increasingly narrative so that people can enter our faith journey and come to know Jesus. A narrative generates an inclusive space where people can step

into with our fear or suspicion. Narrative space is an 'Ashram space' which is inclusive and universal. That is to say, the dynamic of a narrative space is of 'hospitality'. It is a welcoming space where we are 'host' as well as 'hostage' of the visitors so that they can be free, confident and not threatened. The incarnation principle of self-emptying is at work in the hospitality that a narrative nurtures and fosters. To phrase differently, when our faith becomes a narrative it becomes inclusive, dialogical and open in an interfaith context. It is indeed a sound ground for being 'missional' in our witnessing.

3.2. *Eschaton to Eschatos*

The Second Vatican Council's theological position towards the whole question of mission among religions is, by and large, resolved to a theology of Inclusivism which is based on the Biblical passages like God "wants all men [and women] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth" (1 Tim 2:3). The very intention of incarnation is God's all embracing love of the world (Jn 3:16). This 'optimism of salvation' or rather "holy optimism" as Karl Rahner put it, is the undergirding theological principle of this inclusive theology, which is further validated by the notion of "baptism of desire", the implicit faith of the humble. But the theory of 'anonymous' Christians, or of Justin, the Martyr's *Logos Spermatikos* is often critiqued that this is only a refined reformulation of exclusivist position of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. This criticism is contained by bringing the eschatology of the Old Testament tradition which speaks of the pilgrimage of all Nations towards the Heavenly Jerusalem and, then all people will worship the Israelite's God of Hosts. It looks like an acceptable middle way validating social reality of religious pluralism in historical plane and at the same time Church's stance of inclusivism is not compromised. As a theological strategy it sounds appropriate. But it looks more an apologetic stratagem than a creative approach to the reality of many religions. Here the mission among religions is conveniently slighted over and postponed to Eschaton. The resources of religious pluralism are not explored and exploited for the greater manifestation of the Risen One. Here, the critical question of being missional in the meeting of religions is how to figure out and to live out our Christian life among the religions in a creative way that incorporates other pursuits into our

faith so that Christian revelation is further fathomed, explicitated and disseminated.

Probably, a theological shift from Eschaton to Eschatos seems promising in our mission among religions especially in Asian context. Our faith tells us that the Eschatological perfection is accomplished in the Risen Christ who is, as Paul put it, the "first fruit of resurrection". Patrick Regan astutely articulates: "Hence the eschaton is really not a thing (*eschaton*), but a person (*eschatos*). It is the Lord Jesus himself ... the one in whom God and man have fully and finally met in the Spirit... In him, man and the world have, for the first time, come to be what they were meant to be." The startling message of the New Testament is that 'God's Time' (*pleroma*) is fulfilled in Christ, the Risen. The New Testament thus reinterprets time anew so much so that no longer do we wait for salvation; it is readily available in the Risen One who is ubiquitous and universal since he is the Lord of history of the past, present and future, although the completion of *parousia* lies in the Eschaton. Thus New Testament 'personalizes" salvation history in Christ. That's to say, the unbound Incarnate-Risen One is a neat cultic package of event, object, sacred place, theophany, and cult, here-now, always immediate and accessible.

The Christian mission largely failed to portray the Risen Christ. Maybe, due to the preoccupation with body-soul dualism in the Western thinking, the Western missionaries emphasized the vicarious suffering and death of Jesus. Consequently a crucified Christ was prominently projected. Indeed the crucified generates a spontaneous vibe with Asian poor and their travails; in Asia, there exists, indeed, a great fascination towards the crucified Jesus who becomes a natural partner in the Asian liberative struggles. But in the long run it may not endear the Asian religious imagination which ultimately looks for a victorious God. Their gurus are always awakened ones. You will not find a single victim God in the Asian pantheon of thousands of gods and goddesses. Lord Siva, lord Krishna, lord Vishnu, Kali, Durga etc., all are victorious ones. Hindu thinkers in their private talks would say with their tongue in their cheek that India/ Asia would have been Christian if the Risen Christ as the Awakened was prominently portrayed instead of a religion of "crossianity'! Chinese

people initially accepted Jesus in large numbers but Confucian philosophers critiqued the wisdom of accepting a God who is a fiasco and consequently they deserted the Christian faith en masse. The Christian missionaries were naively stuck with the cross, and failed to portray the Risen Christ beyond the cross.

Indeed there is a legacy of victim gods and goddesses (Mariamma Yellamma, Kaamma, Morasamma and Matangi) in the Dalit tradition but ultimately they become victorious through their death. They are Victim-Victors like Jesus the Risen. There is a Dalit concept of the evolution of the divine from the murder (*kolaiyil uditha* deivangal). Ultimately the murdered Dalit God evolves into the victorious one. Only a victorious God, the risen Christ is enduring and endearing to religious imagination and cultural receptivity in Asia. It is a world of divine *lila* of Krishna. God is *succidananda*. Happiness is the ultimate profile of the Divine. It seems, the Asians are more fascinated by the 'Smile of Buddha' than the gory face of the Crucified! Jesus, the Risen One is the Smile of New Life. He is the exuberance of existence and, after all his ultimate message is 'Abundance of Life". We failed to project a God who is victorious, God who empowers and enlightens the pilgrimage of humanity from within and without because he is Eschatos in whom Eschton is fulfilled and personalized. Christian engagement in Interfaith dialogue must explore Asian cultural and religious sensibility and should portray the Eschatos. The Risen One must be the agent of interfaith dialogue because he is the Dialogue of Existence, in whom the whole world is reconciled, retained and restored. Then the Eschatos should become, the bridge and platform of dialogue. In the Christian engagement with interfaith dialogue, Hindus, Muslims, Dalits, Buddhists must be able to 'see' the Risen One and thus Christian dialogue with other religions should become an invitation to the New Life. There is no need of any eschatological postponing for encountering Jesus for the Eschatos is already the co-pilgrim of Asian pilgrimage!

Our great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and the rank and file have already accepted Jesus as their guru. They astutely articulate their double loyalty this way: We are Hindus by religion but we are Christians (disciples or bhaktas) by faith.

There is, indeed, want of clarity in their acceptance of Jesus in their God experience from our doctrinal point of view. However, there exists already a cultural receptivity for the Jesus Christ and what is needed to broaden and deepen this receptivity so that many more find inspiration and enlightenment in the Eschatos in their Asian journey of life so the crucified Christ resurrect in their Asian struggles. Christian mission among religions must make the presence of the Risen One aflame. What is needed is a shift of emphasis from the Crucified to the Risen, which does not exclude the import of the Crucified because the path to resurrection is always through the cross!

3.3. Private Talk to Public Truth

It was in the context of wide spread abuse of religion in the Middle Ages that the advocacy of Western secularism prevailed upon the West, and it eventually led to a sharp separation between religion and state. This divide is tenaciously being guarded in the West through the centuries. Today, what we find is the ascendency of the "secular space" in the national and international discourses owing to people's movements like those of human rights, social justice, women rights, ecological and environmental concerns, anti-corruption (Jan Lokpal Bill - citizen's ombudsman bill) etc. The present dispensation of participatory and representative democracy lends the needed political sympathy and support to these secular movements. Indeed, the role of religions in the society is also vitally debated and interrogated in the secular space, today. In this context, the supportive role that the modern media provides to such debate is indomitable. Our modern media is now swarmed with scams and scandals of the religious establishments and leaders. The motives and manipulations of perverted religious leaders who instigate the present day terrorism, violence, war, communal hatred are interrogated and analysed threadbare in the open media, and thus the public are conscientized on the reality bites of religious hypocritical practices, and help them to apply their critical intelligence on religious teachings and practices. The religious leaders can no more take the people's support for granted and keep them at the receiving end. No doubt, religions are thoroughly under the scan and surveillance of civil society which is, as a matter of fact, doing a laudable prophetic role especially when religions

are becoming exclusivist and are opting for fundamentalist positions and eventually becoming agencies of communal hatred and riots.

This new assertion of the secular space in modern globalized and media savvy world brings about a scenario in which religious truths have to evolve to public truth. That's to say, religious teachings and positions are to be validated in the public space also, apart from their religious enclaves and echelons. In other words, religious teachings are to be debated in 'parliament of people' and are to be 'approved' in the secular space. It means, the credibility of a religion and the genuineness of its practices is to be earned in the competitive public space. It is a hermeneutical principle that the verity of religious truths are to be corroborated with 'receptivity' of the collective because they are of logos (meaning), not of mere objective truth. Mere a rational and an abstract argument that tries to validate a truth statement is not enough to substantiate the 'relevance' of a religious truth in a cultural matrix; it should resonate with the public perception and cultural sensibilities.

What is attempted to drive home is that religious truth has to embody a genuine 'public meaning' especially in the present democratic space and open media. The revolutionary input that Jesus has brought about in the whole history of religions is the discovery of the 'sacred' in the 'secular-space'. He has bridged the 'secular' and 'sacred' and salvation is figured out through the world and has secularized salvation. The very logistic of incarnation substantiates Jesus' praxis. In line with Jesus' pedagogy, the revolutionary shift that the Second Vatican Council has initiated is the focus on the task of making the Gospel penetrate every secular pace so that mystery of incarnation permeates in every realm – be it economics, law, politics, culture, arts, sciences, social movements etc. as "yeast to the dough" (Mt 13:33), as "salt of the earth" and 'light of the world" (Mt.5:13-16). It is Christianity that brought the import of secularity in religious praxis. Jesus though a lay person but well-versed in Scriptures refused to identify with the religious establishment and its spokespeople like Sadducees and Pharisees. He brought religion out from the Holy of Holies into the secular space – home, the table, the lakeshore, the boat, the sea, the marketplace, the street-corners, the vineyards, the wheat fields, the mountains, the olive groves etc., even though he continued

to visit the religious spaces like synagogues, temple and even protested against profanation of the sacred space (Mt 21:12-13). Jesus' legacy was pursued by his disciples at a great risk. When the early Christians were expelled from the Synagogues, they regrouped in secular space where Jews and gentiles, slaves and free men and women could meet (Gal 3:28) at the Table, recounted the stories of their mission works, and "broke the bread" in the invisible presence of the Risen One, and thus they empowered themselves and could sustain Jesus' movement against innumerable political, social and religious odds.

What is being endeavoured to convey is that in Early Christianity, the sacred was not confined in the sacred spaces of Temple but was celebrated in the secular spaces of home and market place where everyone was welcomed regardless of colour, creed, caste, cult, class or race. The cherished Christian values of justice, peace, freedom, dignity, integrity, respect for human rights, compassion for the disadvantaged found expression in these secular spaces through the "practice of hospitality" (Rom 12:13, Heb 13:2) which was Early Christian's veritable praxis of mission among other faiths. All these values, including religious freedom are the ones upheld in the modern secular societies. The Church's Catholicity, which literally means ubiquity, was realized through secular spaces. Jesus' unique revolutionary feat was that his Gospel was not presented as an exclusive religion but as an inclusive and an open faith which bears a 'public meaning' to the core and his teachings are 'public truths' in which everyone can participate unbiased. And the Christian mission among religions should resolve to Jesus' own praxis of religions as 'public truth' in 'public space' because the basic Gospel of Jesus is the Kingdom of God amidst us. Moltmann aptly combines Christian identity and public relevance in the vision of the Kingdom of God: "There is no Christian identity that does not have public relevance, neither public relevance without the Christian identity of theology because any theology must be a theology of Kingdom of God"

Taking into account of the present globalized scenarios, the multi-faith secular space seems to be the most appropriate and congenial platform to do mission among the World's religions. There, the Gospel and world's religions can interact in the ambit of 'public meaning'

unprejudiced and without mutual suspicion . Jesuit's document on *Our Mission and Interreligious Dialogue,* 43th General Congregation of Jesuits aptly articulates this new dimension of Interfaith ministry: "Dialogue is a new way of being Church" in which we discover the "deeper dimensions of our Christian faith and wider horizons of God's salvific presence in the world" and engage in activity that "grasps the deeper truth and meaning of the mystery of Christ in relation to the universal history of God's self-revelation." What is needed is that the interfaith dialogue must increasingly be figured out in 'Secular- space' which is more versatile, creative and innovative. The FABC speaks of the urgency of "very concrete earthing" of the Church in its mission. The secular space looks the veritable arena where the orthopraxis of dialogue of religions can rightly be 'earthed' resonating with the occurrences of the world.

What is implied is that a true dialogue of religions will take place only when the private 'religious truths' are translated into "public truths" through common endeavours and thus religions become the agencies of social and cultural transformations. Christianity which has a commendable legacy of a religious praxis right in the secular space can take a leading role in this regard so that religions of the world as a whole become vital agencies of social transformation and thus they are integrated into the concerns of society. The Christian mission among religions must be focused and located in this transformation of religious truths into public truths through a honest and comprehensive dialogue so much so that the credibility and competency of all religions are regained for the advancement of humankind in justice, peace and love. Such mission will engender a broader scenario of greater democratization of religions and its practices in the purview human rights, social justice and common good. To phrase differently, Christian mission among religions should give birth a 'parliament of religions' in the secular space, which will in turn empower the people to think of their own religious traditions in an inclusive dialogic frame embodying the sensibilities of the multi-faith context. Thus Christian mission among religions must help the people to figure out their private pursuit of faith in public space so that a social and cultural responsibility is appropriated into their religiosity and thus interreligious talk becomes an interreligious walk for the greater integrity and integration

of humankind. Such a praxis of interfaith dialogue in the public space will occasion to root out the mal practices of the religious establishments and leaders.

Asian religions also hold the parity of the 'secular' and 'sacred'. In Asian religious pursuits there exists a vital continuum of religions, secular life and spirituality. Aloysius Pieris rightly points out that in Asia 'religion is a philosophy of life' and 'philosophy is a religious vision'. Asian secularism, unlike the Western secularism which accentuates the divide between religion and state, fosters a political space in which all religions can coexist and interact proactively and promote an inclusive religiousness of which Indian Sufism, and Sikhism are classical illustrations. India/ Asia could be a vital and congenial arena for the Church to explore and experiment a creative and innovative mission among religions in the perspective of greater amity and solidarity of human race. It is precisely here that the leadership and contribution of theAsian Churches abides to serve the Global Church.

Conclusion

If we journey through the various Church's teachings on interfaith relations, right from the "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (1965)", to the post conciliar documents like "Dialogue and Mission" 1984 and "Dialogue and Proclamation" 1991 and if we are informed of the various interreligious ministries at the cultural centres, various courses introduced in priestly and religious formation centres and theological centres, it can confidently be stated that 'interfaith dialogue' has irreversibly gone deep into our identity consciousness and Christian psyche, and has also become a crucial coordinate of Christian theology. It is no more an academic idea but a significant praxis of our faith today because it engenders a "mutual enrichment" (RM # 55, DP # 9), "purifies" our faith (DP # 32), and "transforms" our Christian life.(DP # 47). Hence it has grown into an essential constituent of Christian faith. To phrase differently, an interfaith culture permeates in our theological literature, spirituality, social apostolate, and even in Eucharistic celebrations which has become a veritable site of interfaith dialogue. Sometimes the Hindus and Muslims outnumber Christians in our Eucharistic celebrations especially in pilgrim centres. The most important aspect of the evolution

of the interfaith dialogue is that it is no more a 'private talk' but a 'public walk' and it facilitates to read the public meaning of the religious truths. Consequently interfaith dialogue has veritable role in fostering social integration and amity. Even the political leadership infers the imperative of interfaith values and policies to engender a lasting peace in the present world of mistrust and hatred. In this regard, Hans Küng has rightly stated: "There will be no peace among nations without peace among religions. And there will be no peace among religions without dialogue among them." To sum up, the interfaith dialogue has abundant potential to play a greater role of bringing about social justice and world peace. The mission of the Church, as delineated above, is to become the 'power point' (not the centre) in the network of world's religions so that Jesus' Gospel becomes a vital force to build up an interfaith community in the New Life Jesus has brought about.

Divyodaya
Coimbatore

Editorial

Religion is an essential element of human existence, for religion articulates the self-transcending dynamic of the human. Religions are integral parts of human history, for they are the culturally conditioned expressions of the structural orientation toward the *Beyond*. Today humans worldwide make a critical reflection on the role of religion in human development and on the challenges of the plurality of religions. One becomes conscious of the ambiguities on the religious landscape too:

On the one hand religion awakens in humans the awareness of the incomprehensible mystery of the Divine, on the other hand religions tend to fix this mystery onto personified names and forms. Religion liberates the human spirit towards the infinite horizons of the *Beyond*, however religions tie the human spirit to concrete structures of life and thought. Religion in its core message binds human hearts in love, at the same time religions also bring about conflict and violence. Religion teaches that nature is the sacred dwelling place of the Divine, but religious festivals are celebrated heavily polluting the earth, the rivers and the air space.

These and other ambiguities are very conspicuous on the religious landscape of India. This land is the cradle of some of the great religions. The average Indian is extolled as a *religious* person. In spite of the onslaught of secular worldviews and the massive influence of the media the flame of religiosity seems to remain alive in the hearts of the Indians. This can be noticed in family customs, village festivals and the proliferation of rituals.

Still the question could be asked: are we Indians authentically religious? How come that a vibrant religiosity coexists with dire poverty

and social discrimination? Religions in India are very susceptible to manipulation by power-crazy political parties, by a greed-based market economy and above all by the vested interests of fundamentalist religious preachers. There seems to be no other country where the public space is so aggressively occupied by religions. Religious performances make a lot of noise without any sensitivity to the neighbours, religious processions block the traffic with no concern for the public, religious festivals are celebrated with a minimum care for the cleanliness of the environment, religious meetings become a threat to social life with no regard for civic peace and religious houses of worship are built so pompously that one wonders if the God of the poor dwells there.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* is attempting an analysis of this malaise on the religious landscape of India. In the first article S. Painadath makes a basic distinction between spirituality and religion, and offers a paradigm for a critical reflection on the ambiguities of religions. Jose Kuriedath offers a penetrating sociological analysis of the religious situation and unearths the root causes of the political manipulation and market techniques which religions develop. Vincent Kundukulam reflects on the meaning of rituals and points out the aberrations of ritualism on the religious landscape of India.

The last article is a special feature to commemorate the 50th year of the Second Vatican Council that brought about radical changes in the Catholic Church, especially in the Church's relation to other religions. Prof. Dr. Paul Knitter, a well known scholar in matters of inter-religious dialogue, analyses the theological developments in the Church after the Council, and calls for the vision to go beyond the Council perspectives. Vat. II built a bridge, but one cannot stay on the bridge forever; one needs the courage to cross the bridge and explore the diverse paths of the Spirit beyond.

It is our hope that these critical reflections on the contemporary religious situation will contribute to some creative steps towards inter-religious harmony.

S. Painadath

Dialectics between Spirituality and Religion

Sebastian Painadath

Sebastian Painadath SJ, founder-director of Sameeksha, Centre for Indian Spirituality, Kalady, India, offers a theological paradigm to analyse the evolution of spirituality to religion. Religion with its four-fold symbolic language is bound with culture and hence prone to ambiguities. But the divine Spirit transforms religions through the mystical and the prophetic dynamics. The way to be alert to this Spirit is to respect the diversity of religions and recognise the unity in spirituality.

In order to understand the phenomenon of religion and analyse much of what is happening on the religious landscape of India it is helpful to reflect on the basic distinction between spirituality and religion.

Spirituality

Spirituality, as the term indicates, is the experience of the Spirit. It is the experience of being gripped by the dimension of self-transcendence, of being grasped by the ultimate concern. Spirituality is basically the awareness of the ineffable mystery of life, the sense of the ultimate meaning and final goal in life. No one would honestly say: I like to live without seeing any meaning in my life. No one can have the *courage to be* without some sense of the ultimate goal of life. Everyone feels a sense of being pulled to the horizons of the Beyond. This is basically spirituality.

A classical example that clarifies this concern is that of a bird in a cage. If one puts a bird in a cage, the bird becomes restless. It flies in all directions, hits on the rails and tries somehow to escape this confinement.

Even if one gives the bird the best of food it continues to be restless. It feels that it is created for the freedom of the skies, and hence the cage is felt as a limiting factor. Existence within the confinement of the cage is estrangement from the true being. The bird feels utter loneliness within the cage. Loneliness comes up when one is not conjoined to the true reality. This image is used by the classical Indian and Greek sages to describe the situation of the present human existence. Every person feels a deep-rooted existential loneliness. Even if one has the best friends and access to all sorts of enjoyments, one remains basically lonely. In fact the more one immerses oneself into worldly possessions and joys, the lonelier one becomes! This ambivalence shows that there is something beyond the material within the human person. But there is an existential estrangement in the very fabric of human existence in this world. The bird feels its loneliness oppressing when it hits on the rails. Similarly the human person experiences loneliness intensely when confronted with factors of estrangement. To sense painfully the limited as limited means that one is structurally oriented towards unlimited horizons. There is an essential orientation towards the *Beyond* in the very structure of the human person. The awareness of this orientation is spirituality.

In this sense spirituality is something universal. It is the consciousness of being grasped by a sense of the Beyond. Human mind objectifies everything in order to grasp it, and hence the mind tries to name the Beyond. But the reality of the Beyond is beyond all names and designations. "From That the mind returns, without attaining it." (Tait.Up. 2.4) In the spiritual evolution of humanity this all- transcending and all-immanent reality is called the Sacred, the Holy, the Infinite, the ultimate Ground of being... Spirituality is an awe-inspiring as well as fascinating awareness (*tremendum et fascinosum*) of the all-pervading mystery of reality. Spirituality is the vision-and-way of life that evolves out of the perception of the ultimate depth dimension of life.

What is this ultimate Reality, beyond the Beyond (*parat param*)? This is a question that rises from the depth of the human heart. This question resounds in all cultures and countries across the centuries. In as

much as the human being is a person, the ultimate reality cannot be an impersonal reality; the ultimate source of the personal cannot be less than personal. But in as much as it is beyond personal names and forms it should be trans-personal. The ultimate reality as transpersonal would mean that it is the ultimate subject-and-object of knowing-and-loving. A universal term for this transpersonal dimension of the Ultimate is Spirit. Spirit literally means breath, vital energy, consciousness, source of life. As oriented towards the ultimate Spirit, that pervades the entire reality and transcends everything, the human person experiences the power and presence of the Spirit. This is *spirit*uality.

There is an existential exigency in human life to be loved: I become *I* through the thou. It is through intense and intimate inter-personal encounter that the human person comes to blossoming. But no concrete experience of a human thou can still the thirst for being loved. The quest for love is oriented to the Infinite, to the ultimate source of love. In fact in every bit of genuine experience of human love there is an immanent touch of the Infinite. There is an inherent craving in humans to experience being loved by the ultimate reality. Hence the ultimate reality is addressed with personal names and conceived in personal forms. This is an inevitable mode of the functioning of the mind with all its cognitive and emotional drives. In the spiritual evolution of humanity the ultimate reality is therefore conceived as God in personal forms and as the Divine with the transpersonal dimension. The English word *God* points to the source of goodness, the Latin term *Deus* refers to the source of Light, the Sanskrit term *deva* indicates that which shines through. By addressing the ultimate reality in personal terms one does not limit the Infinite to a finite form nor does one project one´s personal needs on to the Divine. The anthropomorphic forms attributed to the Divine are only a help for the human mind to experience the love of the Divine; the mythical images used to represent the Divine are only expressions of the power and presence of the Divine. They do not in fact reduce the Transpersonal Divine to a particular personal God. God is personal, but not *a* person before us or above us. The spiritual seeker encounters this God within the heart, the sacred space within. "We attain to the inward depths

whenever we enter into our heart. God who probes the heart awaits us there. There we discern our proper destiny beneath the eyes of God." (II. Vatican Council, GS.14)

Spirituality as the awakening to the dimension of self-transcendence is a universal experience. Ultimately it is the experience of the *one* divine Light that enlightens the minds of all, and of the *one* divine Spirit that guides the steps of all in life. The ultimate reality is in fact *One (ekam, unum, to hen)*. Perceptions may vary, but the reality is one. "There is only one Truth / Reality, those who perceive it speak of in different ways. *Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti*, (Rig Veda, 1.164.46). The presence of the one divine Spirit is brought to awareness in diverse ways. Spirituality has therefore a universal as well as a unitive dimension. "There is only one divine plan for every human being who comes into this world. The differences are a less important element when compared with the unity which is radical, fundamental and decisive." [1]

Spirituality is basically the awareness of the mystery of oneself, of the cosmos and of the Divine. The human person is overwhelmed by the incomprehensibility of the Divine, the abysmal depth of the ultimate reality. The truly spiritual person will not dare to give a final name to this mystery, for it eludes all names and forms. On every name and form of the Divine one has to say *neti neti*, (not so, not so, Brih. Up.3.9.26) *nada nada* (not this, not this, John of the Cross). The divine commandment, 'thou shall not make an image of God' has validity in all spiritual pursuits. In reality the Divine is the Ever Beyond. This is the perception in all cultures: the *Sunyata* (Buddhism), the *Brahman* (Upanishads), *Parat param* (Gita), *Allau Akbar* (Islam), the Effulgent Darkness (Dyonisius the Areopagite), the God beyond God (Meister Eckhart). *Deus semper major*! "God lives in unapproachable light." (I Tim. 6:16) Sensitivity to this dimension of divine mystery is the core of genuine spirituality. The reality of the Divine always remains hidden behind every concrete experience. No particular revelation can exhaustively unfold

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1. John Paul II, *Assisi*, 22.12.1986

the divine mystery, for everything particular is conditioned by time and space, historical and social factors. The finite cannot fully grasp the Infinite, nor can it fully reveal the Infinite. 'Whatever is received, is received, according to the mode of the receiver'. A truly spiritual person is a seeker, ever on a relentless inner pilgrimage.

Religion

Religion is the articulation of spirituality. The universal experience of spirituality finds expression in particular religions. The unitive consciousness of the divine Spirit unfolds itself in and through the diversity of religions. The underlying sense of the mystery is made manifest through concrete forms of religions. This process takes place through a dialectics between revelation and faith and evolves through symbols.

Revelation is the self-manifestation of the divine mystery. Revelation is the concrete self-manifestation of the divine presence in human consciousness as perceived within the frame of the mind, and consequently within the parameters of time and space. Hence revelation has inevitably a personal structure of communication through a historical event or in a mythical form, through a person or a symbol. The Divine encountered as personal *thou* addresses the human *I*. The divine Word is communicated through human words. The divine Wisdom is shared in human knowledge. The divine Love is experienced in human relationship. Hence every revelation is limited to the conditioning factors of language and symbolism, history and culture. There is no absolute revelation as the only norm for all times and peoples. The *one* divine mystery unfolds in the many religions, the *one* divine Word (*Logos, Vac*) vibrates in the diverse Scriptures, the *one* divine Spirit (*Pneuma, Atma*) works through the manifold symbols. The universal divine presence communicates itself through a particular person, event or symbol.

Faith is human response to the divine revelation. Faith is always related to a concrete revelatory experience, and hence to a particular medium of the self-revelation of the divine mystery. Spirituality is the universal consciousness of the Spirit; faith is a particular access to it in

response to a concrete self-revelation of the Spirit. Spirituality finds concrete articulation in the response of faith. Faith gives rise to an integrated vision-and-way of life. Through faith one surrenders oneself to God in love and contemplation. *Credere* means *cor-dare*, to give the heart; *sraddha* too means opening the heart. This is the response of a believing person or community. There can be no universal faith, no one universal norm for evaluating the validity of faith. The divine Spirit relates in a unique way with every human individual and hence faith is a matter of a relational response. The response of faith admits infinite grades and forms " Whatever form of God a devotee endowed with genuine faith wishes to worship, that very unswerving faith do I strengthen." (Bh. Gita, 7:21). There is a basic need to accept the scope of a rich plurality of faith-responses. The faith of the follower of one religion cannot be judged in comparison with that of another. However it is important that followers of different religions share their faith-experiences with one another as they all find themselves on a common spiritual pilgrimage guided by the one divine Spirit and moving towards the one ultimate goal. All humans are spiritual co-pilgrims. Through a process of inter-religious dialogue it becomes clearer that the Divine is an unfathomable mystery, not exhausted by any faith response or religious expression; and through inter-religious collaboration the dehumanizing forms of religiosity are being challenged and the liberative potential of each faith-response effectively brought out. "We should have a great respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills."[2]

Symbol is the medium through which revelation is communicated and the response of faith is articulated. Symbol is the language of the Divine in addressing the humans, as well as the language of human response. The God who speaks and the human person who listens, meet in symbols. God's reaching out to the human reality and the human response to the salvific presence merge in symbols. Thus symbols have

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2. John Paul II, *Red. Missio*, 29

a unifying power: symbol is that which integrates, assembles (*synballein*). "Symbols identify, assimilate and unify diverse levels and realities that are to all appearances incompatible."[3] Religious symbols articulate the longing of the finite for the Infinite and unfolds the love of the Infinite for the finite. They bring out the potential infinity of the finite and open infinite horizons for the creativity of human persons. All that we humans can perceive in relation to the Divine is of a symbolic nature. Our language about God is inevitably symbolic. However every symbol of the divine-human communication is a product of a concrete culture. Every symbol emerges from within the framework of time and space, from within the dynamics of human mind and psyche. As Augustine says, religious symbols conceal the divine mystery more than they reveal it. No particular symbol can exhaustively express the incomprehensible divine mystery. "If you know God it is not God!" (Augustine, PL. 8.663). It is this provisional character of religious symbol that keeps it alive in transparency. A religious symbol is essentially a relational reality: it functions in relation to the divine mystery that it symbolizes and also in relation to the socio-cultural context from which it emerges. Wherever this relationality is overlooked and a concrete symbol is declared absolute, it becomes an idol that is unable to point to the divine depth of reality. A symbol is a transparent reality, an idol is opaque. Symbol leads the human to the Divine; an idol blocks the way. Since symbols are essentially relational they are pluriformic. There is an infinite variety of symbolic mediation of the encounter between God and human persons. Hence plurality of religions belongs to the very fabric of reality and to the epistemological process of truth-perception. In this sense diversity could be seen as an integral element of God's universal self-communication. Diversity is beauty, not only in nature, which comes from the divine source, but also in culture produced by human creativity.

Religion is the symbolic expression of spirituality. However spirituality finds expression not only in the traditional religions. Various secular initiatives, ecological projects, justice movements, peace

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3. M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1958,455

endeavours and literary pursuits may be expressions of genuine spirituality in the broader sense. In all of them a sense of the Beyond is inherent, a concern for the integral human welfare. This has to be respected and promoted. One may here speak of an evolving *secular spirituality* that unfolds the sacred dimension of the secular without adherence to a traditional religion. Such movements could also be a corrective to the ways of thinking and acting advocated by religious traditions.

Since in the present study we are analysing the structure and role of religion, let us confine our reflection to the emergence and evolution of religion in human life. When the dialectics between revelation and faith is articulated through particular symbols, religion emerges. Religion is the articulation of faith as a concrete perception of spirituality. The content of religion evolves from within the faith experience, but the format of religion comes from the cultural matrix because symbols are products of a culture. Hence religion has a bipolar mode of existence. It mediates between the sacred and the secular aspects of life. Through religion one has access to the divine dimension of life which permeates the entire secular realm. Religion enables the believer to discover the transforming presence of the divine Spirit at the heart of the secular reality. But in as much as symbols are ambivalent media of divine revelation, religion evolves within the factors of the ambiguities of life. Religion can therefore guide a believer towards God; it may also block the way to the Divine. Before analysing this ambivalence let us have a look at the relationship between spirituality and religion.

Spirituality and Religion

How are spirituality and religion related to each other?
Spirituality is the core of religion, religion is the form of spirituality.
Spirituality is the content of religion, religion is the language of spirituality.
Spirituality is the *Gehalt* of religions, religion is the *Gestalt* of spirituality.
Spirituality is the *bhava* (inner dynamics) of religion, religion is the *rupa* (external form) of spirituality. •

Spirituality is the *enstasis* of the spirit, religion is the *ekstasis*.

Spirituality is the pole of unification, religion is the point of diversification.

Spirituality is the experience of the Ultimate, religion is exposure to the concrete.

Spirituality awakens the seeker to the Trans-personal Divine, religion helps the believer encounter the personal God.

Spirituality is essentially one, religions are existentially manifold.

Spirituality is like the root dimension, religions evolve like branches which grow in different directions.

Spirituality is something hidden, religion is the manifest form.

Spirituality wakes up in the intuitive buddhi, religion finds articulation in the mind .

Spirituality points to the mystery of the divine Spirit, religion refers to the creativity of the human spirit.

Integration of Religion with Spirituality

Religion is a symbolic articulation of spirituality. Symbol is the primary language of religion. Symbols emerge from within the human psyche and from the living context of human culture as well. Culture has immense forms of human creativity. Diversity of cultures, and consequently plurality of religions, are grace-filled elements of the spiritual evolution of humanity. They manifest the infinite capacity of human self-creativity in response to the self-revealing God. They also point to the inexhaustibility of the Divine, for no symbol can exhaust the mystery of the Divine. Every symbol is conditioned by the factors of human receptivity and creativity, factors of time and space, elements of mind and psyche, both personal and collective. Hence every religion has a limited ambience.

In the process of the evolution of spirituality into a religion four areas emerge, in which the spiritual experience finds symbolic articulation: creed, cult, code and community. These are like the basic channels through which spirituality evolves into religion. Or to use another imagery,

these form the four corner pillars of the religious structure built on the hidden foundation of spirituality.

- Creed contains the foundational points of faith which the believers have to adhere to.
- Cult means the realm of worshipping God on the basis of the grace of the core experience.
- Code describes the ethical norms in response to the demands of the primary experience.
- Community is the social milieu in which believers continue to participate in the experience of the original experience.

A believing community needs these symbolic elements to articulate its faith, just as one needs a language in order to develop and communicate one's thoughts. Every language has its structural limitations, so too every religion. No creativity is possible without language, however limited it may be; no spirituality can unfold itself creatively without religion (or quasi-religion of human search for the *Beyond*) however fragmentary it may be.

With these elements religion inevitably takes the format of a social reality. Religion thus unfolds the spiritual dimension of the social fabric and cultural process of human life. Hence it is necessary that these four areas of symbolic expression be authentically preserved and effectively communicated in a way that is meaningful to the contemporary situation. For this the religious community officially appoints certain persons who have the mission to preserve the symbols of faith, interpret them properly and make the pristine spiritual experience alive in the life of the believers.

- Theologians are commissioned to interpret the contents of the credal system in a creative encounter between the primary experience and the contemporary situation.

- Priests are ordained to help the community experience the transforming presence of the Divine through its participation in cultic performances and rituals.

- Teachers of law have the responsibility to explain ethical norms based on the pristine encounter and in response to the challenges of the times.

- Leaders of the community have the authority to guide the believers and to keep them together in harmony and collaboration.

These four groups of *office bearers* are needed in any organized religion for keeping the believers authentically rooted in the original spiritual experience, and for making them respond to the demands of contemporary society and culture. This is a consequence of the societal nature of human life and the social consequences of spirituality. These four functions are esteemed as sacred functions for they give expression to the sacred dimension of social life. They have a significance and validity in the community life of the believers. Their role is to integrate religion with spirituality, the present mode of life with the pristine experience of divine self-communication. A term like *priest* may not be found in a particular religion; but certain cultic forms are always found for which persons are appointed to conduct these on behalf of the believing community. In most religions these four functions rest on different individuals.

Alienation of Religion from Spirituality

Since symbols emerging from culture supply the language of religion, cultural factors exert a tremendous influence on the evolution of religion. One may speak of a cultural hegemony on the sacred landscape of religion. This is an inevitable sociological process. The evolution of religion is intertwined with politics and economy, with art and literature. Political powers manipulate religious feelings in order to defend their power and privilege. Commercial agencies misuse religious expressions with a profit motive. Cultural elite domesticate religious symbols to safeguard their vested interests. A symbiosis between religious authorities and socio-political powers often emerges. Religion thus tends to get uprooted from spirituality. Though spirituality emerges out of the pure well-springs of the Spirit, religions as they flow down like a river collect a lot of sediments of culture, like political concerns, economic interests, power struggles and expansionist ambitions. In every religion there is a constant struggle between the divine Spirit and these factors of estrangement:[4]

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4. S. Painadath SJ, *We are Co-Pilgrims*, ISPCK, Delhi, 2012,pp. 26-39

- Theological reflection loses its transparence and gets stagnated in a sort of dogmatism without being able to communicate an authentic God-experience in the light of the pristine encounter; theology gets estranged from the authentic sources of faith.

- Cultic expressions are devoid of the healing power of the symbols as they end up in sterile ritualism; cult does not draw life from contemplation.

- Interpretation of ethical norms fails to promote responsible free dom but adheres blindly to legalism, which in turn blocks the free dom of the spirit; law kills where letter rules.

- Social structures of the community life get so much politicized that they succumb to an oppressive structuralism, which is insensitive to the 'Spirit that speaks to the community' in ever new ways; a community is liberative only where there is a living communion with the divine Spirit.

Alienation of religion from spirituality is the consequence of these negative developments on the religious landscape. Symbols, which are actually meant to communicate the pristine experience of encounter with the Divine, lose their transparence and become more or less opaque *idols*. The greatest danger in religious life is *idolisation*.[5] Symbols open infinite horizons for growth in the Spirit; idols block this process by subjugating the spirit to the ego, personal or collective. Power, prestige and profit determine the course of action. The constant tension between the transparence of religious symbols and the opaqueness of idols can be found in all the four areas of religious expression, theological, cultic, ethical and social. This tension exists in the historical evolution of every religion. Elitist Brahminism, imperial Christianity, royal Judaism, expansionist Islam, militant Sikhism and politicised Buddhism are phenomena in which a widespread *idolisation* of religion takes place. Its impact can be found in the various fundamentalist movements of these religions today.

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5. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, Chicago, 1963, 86-106

However in spite of the upsurge of fundamentalism the grace of the primary experience of encounter is never totally lost! The transforming power of genuine symbols does not fully vanish from the religious landscape. The spiritual wellsprings never get fully dried up on the religious landscape. The Spirit of God does not disappear from the evolutionary paths of history. The Spirit ever active in history breaks down the walls and fences which human beings put up in order to divide the one world. The presence of the Spirit in history is an explosive presence: it explodes religious structures from within in order to transform them; it activates the integrative power of symbols in spite of the tendency towards *idol*isation. This breakthrough of the divine Spirit takes place in two directions: vertical and horizontal; it finds expression through two charisms: mystics and prophets.

Critique of the Mystic

Mystic is a person gripped by an intense awareness of the incomprehensible mystery of the Divine. The unfathomability and ineffability of the divine reality is the underlying dimension of the mystic's experience. Hence the mystic draws inspiration from a contemplative silence before the abysmal 'depth of God' (*muein*= to be silent, to hide oneself).[6] With this radical openness to the divine mystery mystics develop a keen sensitivity to the limitation of any religious symbol in articulating the presence of the Divine. For them no culturally conditioned religious symbol can exhaustively express the reality of the Divine. Hence they are critical of all symbols, not denying their validity, but upholding their transparence and depth dimension.[7] They challenge all religious functionaries to move constantly towards the ever Beyond:

- Theological search has to go beyond concepts and definitions, and explore the `the breadth and length and height and depth´ (Eph 3:18) of the transforming presence of the Divine manifest in the original encounter; theology evolves through a constant alertness

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6. Raimundo Panikkar, *The Silence of God*, Orbis, New York, 1989, 164-176

7. Robert Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, Oxford, 1970,43

to God's ongoing dialogue with humanity in all realms of life, in all religions of the world.

• Rituals can communicate the experience of the grace of God only if they are nourished by contemplative silence; it is in silence that the depth dimension of the symbols gets unfolded.

• Ethical directives are meant ultimately to make room for the *sacred space* in which the divine Spirit enters the lives of individuals; law is only a help to discern this Spirit within and around oneself.

• Community structures in a mystical perspective are meant to create a home for the believers to experience growth in the Spirit: they may feel accepted and supported in a community that constantly listens to `what the Spirit is saying to the community´; exploration with the Spirit is the dynamics of the community.

The mystic's critique restores in all these four areas of religious life the original meaning and function of symbols. His or her sensitivity to the absolute transcendence of the divine mystery together with an awareness of the radical immanence of the divine grace form the channel through which the divine Spirit transforms the world of religious symbolism. A religion that has lost the mystical dimension is no more *religio*, for it cannot any more unite human life with the divine Ground of being.

Protest of the Prophet

Prophet is a person who feels the inner call to articulate God's Word in a concrete situation. The prophet is in a sense the mouthpiece of God and the spokesperson of the community as well (*nabi=* the one called; *prophetes=* the one who speaks before others). Prophets speak out of an intense experience of the demands of the Spirit "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer 1:10). With this radical sensitivity to the transforming presence of God they proclaim the divine demand of justice in all realms of life. For prophets a religious symbol has meaning only in so far as it expresses the divine depth of human relations, the divine call for human solidarity and the divine concern for the poor. Hence they criticize all forms of religious

expression in relation to their primary motive: promotion of justice. They challenge all functionaries of religion to make integral human liberation their main concern:

- Theological reflection should always explore the ever widening horizons of the work of the Spirit revealed in the primary encounter: theology works out the liberative potential of spirituality.
- Rituals have to alert the believers on the concrete demands of justice and inspire them to share their life with one another; the heart-beat of cult is compassion.
- Laws are meant to help the believers respond to the demands of God's justice in developing solidarity with one another and harmony with creation; conversion to the God who manifests himself in the other is the prophetic motivation of law.
- Leaders of the community have the responsibility to discern and nourish the charisms of the believers in the process of participating creatively in the promotion of justice, the universal salvific work of the Spirit; concern for the poor is the hallmark of a Spiritual community. [8]

The prophetic critique restores in all these four areas of religious life the original meaning and function of symbols. This alertness to articulate the absolute transcendence of the divine plan and this sensitivity to the radical immanence of divine justice are channels through which the divine Spirit transforms the world of religious symbolism. A religion that has lost the prophetic dimension' cannot any more be *religio*, for it does not integrate human creativity with God's transforming work.

Dialectics between Mysticism and Prophecy

The mystic is sensitive to the mystery of the Divine; the prophet is alert to the Word of God.

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8. "The poor appear as the key to an understanding of the meaning of liberation and of the revelation of a liberating God." Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, Orbis, New York, 1983,200

> The mystic emerges with an inner enlightenment and teaches the seekers; the prophet comes out with an inner vocation and exhorts the believers.

> The mystic is enlightened by the divine Light; the prophet is energized by the divine Word.
> The mystic is a seer; the prophet is a listener.
> The mystic speaks in a poetic language; the prophet preaches in a narrative style. The mystic inspires the seekers; the prophet exhorts the community.
> The mystic appears from a unitive awareness of the divine immanence in the silence of the heart; the prophet comes out of an encounter with the divine Lord in the struggles of history.

Ultimately every genuine mystic is a prophet, and every true prophet is a mystic. An unconditional alertness to the divine Spirit is the dynamics of both. Hence the spiritual liberative undercurrents of any religion are brought forth in and through them. They constantly challenge the existing forms of religious symbolism in view of a return to the core experience of the breakthrough of the Divine in the world. Theologians and priests, teachers of law and leaders of the community are constantly confronted with this challenge; it makes them feel threatened for fear of losing the basis on which they build up their security structures of thought and action. The self-willed officials of an established religious community have the anxiety that the mystics and prophets would explode the edifices of their power and authority. The mystic's demand to relativise the traditional symbols in terms of the unfathomable mystery of the Divine disturbs them. The prophet's challenge to relativise the religious forms in view of promotion of divine justice too upsets them. Consequence: mystics are silenced and prophets are persecuted. Instances of this tension can be found in the history of *all* religions.

At the very origin of every religion one can notice that this tension reaches an explosion point, which however is transformed by the divine Spirit into a moment of the divine breakthrough (*kairos*). A person is a mystic or/and prophet, when through him/her the divine Spirit pushes

forward the spiritual evolution of humanity. Around that person a new religious community of disciples may evolve, which would gradually grow into a religion. The emergence of an authentic religion is thus the work of the divine Spirit to liberate spirituality from the ambiguities of religiosity. Israel emerged as the people of God when the prophet Moses came in conflict with the exploitative authorities in Egypt, and he was expelled. The mystical insights and the prophetic critique of Jesus shook the religious establishment of Jerusalem to its foundations and he was crucified. When prophet Mohammed insisted on faith in the one God, he was opposed by the worshippers of local deities and he had to flee. The prophets of the bhakti movements were pushed to the margins by the dominant Brahmin groups; the caste system suffocated them. The mystical silence and prophetic voice of Buddha was resented by the authorities of his time and he was sidetracked. But every such crisis meant the birth pangs of the divine Spirit in history: something new was born in the process of the spiritual evolution of humanity.

This crisis however continues in the historical evolution of religions. The authorities of Israel constantly stoned many of their prophets to death and silenced their wise men. Christianity in the middle ages killed several prophets and burnt mystics at the stake. The religious establishment of Islam persecuted the Sufi mystics and killed several of them. The dominant groups of Hinduism domesticated the mystical literature of India by interpreting them in support of their own power and position, thus draining these scriptures of their powerful prophetic critique. In Buddhism too there has been a constant tension between the dharma communities and the political and economic power groups. This is not a story of the past. In all these and other religions today there is a constant tension between structures and seekers, between authority and charism, between culturally conditioned format and Spirit-generated dynamism. Ultimately it is an inevitable conflict between religion and spirituality in the evolution of any religion. In this process several ambiguities of religion appear and they constantly call for renewal movements inspired by the divine Spirit. Dialogue is the way to discover these movements of the Spirit and to promote them. There is a twofold dialogue:

Intra-religious Dialogue

In spite of the ambiguities of religion spirituality cannot do away with religious expressions. Just as thought needs language for self-expression, spiritual experience needs religious symbols however ambivalent they may be. Mystics and prophets do not speak in the void, but within the context of a given cultural situation. Hence their language too is subordinate to the dynamics of a culture and prone to ambiguities. They too must be constantly alert to the divine Spirit working within and beyond the community. For this they need to have a rootedness in the faith related to the original encounter with God and a sense of belonging to the community of believers. The mystic and the prophet inherit their faith experience in and through the believing community, though their relation to it is that of a critical presence. When the mystic uproots himself or herself from the wider community there is the danger of elitist thinking and the formation of sects. Where the prophet detaches himself or herself from the community, exclusivist claims get the upper hand resulting in religious fundamentalism. Hence only an ongoing 'discernment of the Spirit' in critical interaction with the wider community of believers and its authorities can safeguard the mystico-prophetic movements from their inherent ambiguities. This demands an ongoing creative dialogue between the four-fold officials and the charismatics, for example between theologians and mystics, between priests and prophets. Through this intra-religious dialogue theologians, priests, teachers of the law and leaders of the community awaken the mystic and alert the prophet in themselves and consequently in the life of the community. On the other hand mystics and prophets feel their obligation to be open to the living sense of faith in the community (*sensus fidelium*). Mystical and prophetic dynamics of religion need not always be identified with concrete individuals; these are rather the undercurrents of spirituality within every religion, and they may find articulation in some of the four *officials* of religious life as well. A theologian could be a mystic, a priest may be a prophet. Through such a Spirit- generated process of intra-religious dialogue the believing community gets constantly alerted on the *sacred space*, within which the divine Spirit speaks to the people. Dialogue is ultimately listening to the divine Spirit that speaks through the other.

Inter-religious Dialogue

The divine Spirit is at work at the heart of all religions. The Spirit transforms every religion from within itself through a mystical and prophetic critique. God is incessantly in dialogue with human seekers and this is articulated in the diversity of religions. Inter-religious dialogue makes spiritual seekers aware of this inner dialogue at the depth of all religions. "Inter-religious dialogue at its depth level is always a dialogue of salvation, because it seeks to discover, clarify and understand better the signs of the age-long dialogue which God maintains with humankind."[9] Through dialogue, therefore, we listen to the divine `Spirit that blows where it wills´ - deep in the inner realms of spirituality and beyond all boundaries of religion. Hence a creative inter-religious dialogue takes place not so much at the level of religion as in the depth of spirituality that finds expression through mystical insights and prophetic movements. The deeper we explore the mystico- prophetic dynamics of another religion the closer we come to believers of that religion. With this inner awakening to the converging lines of spirituality we realize that "the differences are a less important element when compared with the unity which is radical, fundamental and decisive."[10]

Inter-religious dialogue would then mean awakening the mystic and alerting the prophet in all realms of religious life through an honest encounter with believers of other religions. Awakening of the mystical dimension would call for a common pursuit in the study of the Scriptures and symbols of all religions, in coming to know deeply the mystics and sages of all cultures, in shared meditation and reflection with seekers of other religions and in an ongoing critical assessment of the symbols of religions. Articulation of the prophetic dynamics would demand collaboration with believers of other religions in bringing about justice and peace, in promoting human rights and protecting the environment, in working out the liberative potential of all religions by respecting their

9. John Paul II, Rome, 13.11.1992
10. John Paul II, Rome, 22.12.1986

prophets and in a continuous critical reflection on the social values of life. Concretely this would mean, for instance, that a Christian encountering the mystical sages and Scriptures of Hinduism would awaken the mystical dimension dormant in the Christian heritage. A Hindu in encounter with the prophets and the Bible would alert the prophetic dynamism latent in the Hindu tradition. Then the Hindu encounters the Christian not outside, but within oneself; the Christian meets the Hindu too within the heart. The Hindu realizes that the genuine Christian concern is not something alien, but an integral part of his/her spirituality. Similarly the Christian finds that the basic Hindu experience is not something strange, but an integral part of his/her spirituality. One listens to the divine Spirit that speaks to oneself in and through the other. Inter-religious dialogue evolves out of the perception of the divine Spirit transforming the structures of religions through the mystical and prophetic dynamics of spirituality. Hence dialogue is not ultimately our work; it is our participation in the divine work of "reconciling all things" in God (*dharma*). Inter- religious dialogue is a receptive process: constant alertness to the divine Spirit that opens itself like a life-giving fountain within the *womb* of all believers (Jn. 7:38), the Spirit that shines forth like a lamp within the *heart* of all seekers (Gita, 13,17). It is at the level of spirituality that religions ultimately interact and enlighten one another.

Sameeksha
Kalady.

Marketing of Religions and Religious Fundamentalism

Jose Kuriedath

Jose Kuriedath, the General Counsellor for Education and Communication Media at the CMI Generalate, reflects on the significance of religion and analyses the root causes of the malaise of fundamentalism and sectarianism. An an expert in religious sociology he shows why a religious association resorts to marketing techniques even to the extent of defeating the pristine message of the religion. When competition gains ground religious fundamentalism takes politicised and commercialised forms. Individual believers seeking solace in faith take to religious practices bereft of rationality and end up in sects. The lasting solution to this malaise is a good grounding in the liberative heritage of religions.

Religions, as we know, use market methods to sell religion. Why do they do that? Is there a link between marketing of religions and the rise of religious fundamentalism? These are the two questions we would like to address in this article. First, regarding the marketing of religions:

Religions as Associations and Marketing of Religions

Meaning System and Organizational System

Society is a complex network of several interdependent social systems which can be rather broadly categorized into two types: organizational systems and meaning systems. The former has been developed by human beings in order to organize their manifold activities – economic, political, social, religious, educational etc. – into stable patterns, and the latter to impart the necessary perspectives, explanations

or meanings to those patterns. Religion, as a system, is in a peculiar position: it has organizational as well as meaning-imparting roles.

Institution and Association

An organizational system has two dimensions: institutional and associational. Social institutions are standardized and accepted modes of behaviour evolved by society in order to obtain some determined goals and satisfy certain needs. But such social institutions necessarily give rise to social associations, since the former can survive only through the latter. It is associations that evolve, maintain and change social institutions to suit the varying needs of human beings. Thus religion is an institution as well as an association.

Association Markets

A religious association needs to attract as many members as possible in order to survive and grow. It also needs to satisfy the needs of the existing members so that they continue to remain in the association. An association has also the need to grow as the best among the same type of associations so that it is esteemed and admired by others. All these goals can be achieved only if the association provides to its members as well as prospective members what the latter expect from the association. In the case of religions, they are expected to provide to their members satisfactory meaning of life as well as teachings and rituals that will impart the meaning. But the production and distribution of the teachings and rituals entail expenses. Hence they cannot be distributed freely; at least the cost of production and distribution should be met by the prospective buyers. For example, the Catholic Church needs to spend quite a good deal of money to build churches, maintain them, train and maintain the clergy who will distribute the teachings and rituals to the members. Hence these expenses must at least partially be met by the members who benefit from that religion. Besides if the Church, as mentioned above, wants to attract more members or provide the members the best services, it needs to distribute the services in the most attractive manner possible. Here the Church may have to use marketing techniques

to wrap the services in the most attractive or appealing style. For example, imagine the style of some feasts or novenas and their colourfulness created by music, decorations, fire-works, presence of numerous clergy etc. and the expenses involved in the process. Thus marketing technique may be considered an essential feature of any religious association. If religion were purely a meaning system, it could have been provided by some charismatic or prophetic leaders with little expense. But the case of associations is different.

Competition and Religious Fanaticism

Conflict of Interests and Intolerance

Every association is the embodiment of man's collective striving for the satisfaction of some interests. If the interests of a number of associations in the same place happen to be the same, conflict becomes unavoidable, since no association can succeed in achieving its goals without exercising power with reference to other similarly placed associations. From a 'social action' point of view, one cannot sufficiently obtain the resources that are scarce, without controlling others from having access to them. This – the element of power in inter-personal or inter- group relationships – is the primary source of conflict in religious associations, because they too are associations created for satisfying certain interests. Since religions can very easily raise emotionality among the followers, the conflict and the consequent exercise of power can be charged with a high degree of emotions. Thus develops what is known as 'religious fanaticism' which threatens the existence of other religious associations. Over and above this natural tendency of associations to become conflict-generative, the superimposition and coalescence of additional interests that happen in the course of history may and do reinforce the tendency and aggravate the divisive impact. If two religious groups are active in the same place and at the same time, conflict emerges because their religious interests themselves collide; besides, other types of interests may also be superimposed in the course of time.

Fundamentalism, a Revival of Primitive Religiosity

Revival of Fundamentalism

As already indicated above, religion as a meaning system provides significant elements of meaning, vision or perspective about world and life to its own members or even to the whole society. Such perspectives or meanings ensure the smooth functioning of the organizational system which in return translates these perspectives into concrete institutions. Of all the meaning systems, religion has been the most fundamental, influential and all-embracing.[1] Thus in religious systems like Christianity, Hinduism or Islam, a large number of people share a common vision about world and life (*Weltanschauung*).

Based on Primordial Feelings

The life-vision being provided by all the modern world religions is founded on the beauty of leading an ethical life. The vision of God, world, life, human society etc. nurtured by a religion finally leads the members to a moral or value-based life according to that vision. But this ethical goal is the result of a slow growth in religions over several centuries. According to anthropologists and religious sociologists, primitive religions originated from the primordial feelings of human beings. Psychologists would tell us that our emotions can be grouped into four categories: fear, sadness, joy and anger. According to them, the first three are primordial feelings, because they are spontaneously generated in us whenever there is a stimulus to that effect. Anger on the other hand is an engineered emotion created by us in order to punish the persons or situations which create negative primordial feelings. It is said that primitive religions originated from the negative primordial feelings, i.e. fear and sadness.

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1. Even though the Marxist reductionism has tried to explain away all meaning systems as superstructures propped up by the economic system, few modern sociologists accept this analysis fully. In fact, Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* is a bold attempt to turn Marx upside down and to prove the influence ðf meaning system on organizational systems.

Primitive man is said to have turned to the infinite power/s in order to find security in fear and solace in sadness. God was conceived by man as the power that provides security and peace in life. But, as I already noted, even though the origin of primitive religions is for fulfilling these primordial functions, all the presently existing world religions have been moved to a higher level by their founders as instruments that help us to lead an ethical life. The original function of obtaining security and peace has been relegated to a secondary level, even though it is not rejected.

But, there is a primitive man in all of us. That primitive instinct of man refuses to die. Even in the twenty-first century, it seeks security and solace through religion. I am not against seeking security and solace through religion; in a way, we are entitled to seek them. Jesus himself sought solace from his Father when he was faced with the pain of the cross. Even so, he did not get ultimate and lasting solace through his prayer and had to climb the cross; the cross was not taken away from him. In other words, Jesus through his life taught us that it is only by going through unavoidable cross that we triumph over the cross. That is the meaning of the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the core message of Christianity. Christianity is not a religion that teaches us the technique to remove cross; it shows us how to get on the cross and win over the cross.

Still many people today, like the primitive men of the olden times, approach religion with the goal of obtaining solace or removal of the cross. That is what we see at novenas, healing ministries, Bible conventions, in the growing number of drop-outs from the Catholic Church to Pentecostal sects, personalized and distorted interpretations of the Bible, disproportionate use of Old Testament imageries rather than those of the New Testament etc. This is religion in the most *fundamental* sense of that phenomenon; it is religious fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism and Marketing

When religion stoops down to its primitive functions and appears to guarantee security and solace, people approach it for these purposes and almost forget the ethical function of religion. When there is wide and

acute demand for this fundamental type of religious experience, the producers and distributors of religious goods sell religion at that level. As the demand increases, so the sale possibilities multiply. The priests become producers of religion according to the nature of the demand, and the marketing of religion proliferates. When it is found that the marketing of religion is really profitable, not merely profitable in terms of money but also with regard to clout, power etc, the religious leaders fall into the trap of religious business.

In this context, it becomes extremely difficult to keep religion as a source of motivation for ethical life, because the demand for that type of religion dwindles and becomes very low. If anyone dares to focus on the ethical demands of religion, he becomes an unpopular prophet like Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah; on the other hand, those who market religion become as popular as Aaron who made the golden calf for his people.

From Fundamentalism to Fanaticism

Loss of Rationality and Fanaticism

When the religiosity of a person becomes fundamentalist in the sense of depending on the primordial feelings, man tends to set aside rationality. Even though religion is said to be supra-rational, it is the proper blending of supra-rationality and rationality that provides religion a balanced approach to life issues. As the present Pope indicated a few years ago in his controversial Regensburg speech, Catholicism has a long history of support from rationality for its mysteries of faith with the help of Greek philosophy. The Pope added that a religion that divests rationality from religiosity will sooner or later become fanatic. Unfortunately he insinuated that Islam was doing just that, and the whole Islamic world rose against him. Can we not see this tendency toward intolerance in some forms of Christian groups also? I leave the search for an answer to the readers.

Fundamental Means Contextualized

Fundamentalism can rise in religions through other routes also. A life-vision (world vision) and its elements, when shared by a group or community, tend to become general or universal (of course, within the

group) so as to be acceptable to all members. In order to be universalized, it is de-contextualized and de-personalized as needed; a sort of abstraction occurs in universalizing the meaning. For example, all the important Catholic doctrines are so universal that it can be equally accepted by members in Asia or America. If at all there is scope for contextualization and personalization in some aspects of the vision, it is rather marginal and mostly limited to practical applications rather than in theoretical points. So each member needs and is required to find the personal application within the permitted parameters of the general vision or meaning. Thus it is hoped, the needs for applying the meaning to personal sphere on the one hand as well as maintaining the universal character of the system on the other will be protected. In this balancing act by the society, the emphasis is always more on protecting the system; otherwise the survival of the group itself will be in danger.

The biblical message acts as the core or foundation of the Christian vision of world and life. What happens often in the fundamentalist interpretations of religious beliefs is the attempt to give more importance to the need for applying the meaning given by the doctrine, a passage in the Bible etc. to the actual life-situation of the person or group in a particular place or time, and less to the protection of the continuity of the meaning system (teaching of the doctrine). If satisfactory meanings for personal or group life can be found within the broad and universalised system, the personal interpretation remains within the permissible parameters. But if it is difficult to find such personal meanings within the system, the new interpreters today dare to go out of the system. There arise thus the dangers or risks of unacceptable interpretations.

Why More Fundamentalism Today?

Interest-centred interpretations of the teachings and rituals of religion are not new. Such attempts have occurred in the past too. Tensions between collective and personal/subgroup interpretations of scriptures (and doctrines) have existed in all religions including Christianity throughout history. The Christianity has experienced such tensions much more than other religions due to the fact it has a central authority to teach and deviations from the official teaching are not acceptable in it. These

tensions have played crucial roles in most of the splits and subsequent formation of sects or denominations within Christianity (and in other religions as well).

Today in the modern society some additional factors, it seems, have made the development of such tensions easier. The first among them is the fast pace of life, due to which the nature of people's needs, emotional and social, material and spiritual, undergo rapid change; a universally valid system or the general system does not keep pace with them and hence cannot easily adapt, and provide adequate and satisfactory solutions to such needs. The systems of the Catholic Church, are slower than those of others. In such situations, people move forward with whatever interpretations, they think, would provide them quick solutions to their needs. (The response of the people in the West in the late sixties to '*Humanae Vitae*' is a well-known case of this phenomenon in the area of moral theology). It has happened and does happen in the field of biblical interpretations also.

Secondly, in the modern society, in which a culture of democracy, a heightened sense of freedom of individuals, liberalization and fast disappearance of conservative rural style prevail, people do not feel as strongly as in the past any fear to step aside or even contradict the official and authoritative teachings.

Thirdly, there is also a gradual decline in the sense of belonging to the institutional (aspect of) religion; instead, people tend to consider themselves as belonging to religion in a non-institutional or spiritual sense. In the West, there is a popular way of describing this development as "shopping around" in religion – taking whatever religious elements one wants to satisfy his/her needs from whichever available source. Sociology speaks of two kinds of solidarity, mechanical and organic[2]. It is noted that mechanical solidarity of rural society is replaced by organic solidarity in urbanized cultures. Collective authority is stronger in mechanical solidarity than in the organic; similarly, collective or common interest has

2. Ronald Flectcher, *The Making of Sociology*, Vol. 2, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2006, pp. 250 ff.

precedence in the former while individual interest takes upper hand in the latter. Hence, there exists in the latter a comparatively weaker bond among individuals in societies and organizations; people may ignore organizations and institutions if they feel that their interests are not sufficiently taken care of by them.

And finally, human beings seek security in life, especially with regard to matters related to religious life. Religion is an important source of security for human beings even in modern times. So a believer expects full emotional security from his faith. Most of the traditional and fundamentalist teachings and interpretations of the Bible give more of such security than the modern teachings. Traditional teachings may be more difficult to explain with the help of rationality, but they provided certainty (supra-rational, of course) for an average believer. In modern times in which there is a great deal of emotional tension and disturbance in life, emotional security rather than an enlightened understanding of faith is sought by average believers.

If all the above mentioned factors are considered together, the reasons for the fundamentalist teachings and interpretations can be easily understood. Most of them are manifestations of one important need that many people experience in modern times: an earnest urge to find an anchoring for life directly and totally in God (i.e., in His words) in the fast changing world, especially when the official interpretations of the Church/ religion on the particular aspect of life, in which one seeks the anchoring, are not sufficiently satisfactory. This urge becomes quite uncontrollable and the so called fundamentalist interpretations compell desirable effects, when the official teachings and universalized interpretations seem to be not capable of dealing with such needs in a person's life or, even if capable, the person does not feel sufficient institutional attachment to explore their potential. In such situations, the people who are in need (which might be social, psychological, spiritual or even material) sidestep or ignore the mediation of the teaching authority or even human rationality (interpretation/hermeneutics). Take for example, practices like the literal interpretation of the biblical passages: tendency towards '*sola scriptura*',

over-spiritualization of biblical messages, allergy towards scientific study and intellectual approach, undue importance to feeling, magical selection of passages for messages, taking verses out of context, concentration on individual piety and neglect of communitarian aspect, gospel of material prosperity etc.; they all have one thing in common: the attempt to rely on divine words directly and emotionally, and obtain need-satisfaction, particularly a sense of security, regarding inner life solely based on the authority of the word of God (as understood by the person) specifically interpreted and made applicable to the person and the context; the mediation of the universalized Church interpretation is bypassed or even rejected. Instead of the authority of the ecclesiastical tradition or the official explanation of the magisterium, both of which may not touch the person individually and emotionally, here symbolic acts like laying of hands for special anointing by the Spirit or claim of the gift of vision try to impart the surety and authority one needs for reinforcing the message.

Biased Views on Eschatology

An observation often made regarding the present state of Western Christianity is worth recalling here. It is said that the ordinary Christian population in the West, barring a small percentage, can be categorized into two sets: one, very conservative, committed to most details of Christian belief system and practices of piety in a very traditional manner and the other, quite secularized and rationally oriented, who accept only certain beliefs that can be mostly supported, if not explained, by reason. This cleavage in the Western Church occurred during the fast spread of secularization and rationality in the wake of enlightenment. Before that, the vast majority of Christians in the Western countries were somewhere in the middle, accepting most of the doctrines of faith and moral teachings, and seeking their explanation or better understanding through intellectual enquiry (*fides quaerens intellectum*), a balancing between faith and reason, as Pope Benedict emphasises these days.

The Kerala Church has been in a similar situation for a long time – almost all have been accepting all the teachings of the Church and those who were intellectually capable managed to find rational support for most

of them (in the pursuit of faith seeking intellect). It seems that things are changing here too; while a section of the population is becoming more rationally oriented, another section, maybe those who are less rational and more emotional by nature or by circumstances, moves to a conservative extreme where they find more surety and security.

In the midst of this ambivalent trend, one doctrine that can be least explained or given surety through rationality or scientific enquiry is that of afterlife. Besides, this is an area in which people are very confused today due to the spread of rational explanations on the one side and shifts by the Church from the traditional theological views with a high degree of definiteness to more sophisticated but hazy explanations on the other side. Different theologians and priests further complicate matters through their personal views with varying shades of meanings. Ordinary people seem to feel a loss of definiteness about the views of afterlife. In such a situation, the conservative section turns towards bizarre explanations that give them meaning of vision and security of life. The biased views on eschatology, it seems to me, may be seen as originating from this tendency. In addition, as we noted above, some of the views also try to meet the changing needs of modern people and their search for the meaning of some unexplainable conditions of life.

Souls in Bondage: An Example of a Weird Teaching

a) Impact of Sins of Ancestors and Tribal Vision

Some interpreters of the Bible teach in certain prayer groups and retreat centres that the sins of ancestors become the curse of the offspring. And they find some biblical passages, particularly from the Old Testament, corroborating their statement. The Old Testament, as we know, is the story of a set of tribal people who experienced the redemptive presence of God in their lives. The anthropological vision of the tribal people is more communitarian than individualistic. Often the whole tribe is regarded as one corporate person, and individuals are conceived as part of the corporate personality. Tribal view does not give recognition to individual personalities as the modern man does; individuality is almost zero in such a vision. Hence the action of every individual

within the tribe is regarded to be the action of a part of the tribe itself and is, therefore, believed to affect the whole tribe. That is more so in the case of ancestors who are given greater importance and role in the shaping of the tribe. (The Catholic doctrine of original sin that is inherited by all human beings due to the sin of Adam is a sort of theological interpretation of the original tribal view). This vision is the foundation of the belief in the impact of the actions of the ancestors on the following generation. Those who accept the Old Testament view without considering this very important limitation force the modern society to withdraw to an archaic and wrong tribal mindset.

b) Superstitious Beliefs being given A Christian Garb

In every society, particularly in those which have not attained a high degree of rationality in their worldview, ordinary people quite often maintain popular beliefs, especially about afterlife. For example, many in Kerala, even the Christians, fear that the souls of the dead wander about as ghosts if they are not fully redeemed and they often enter the body of the living and torment them until they are fully liberated of their sins. Along with this superstition, the residue of the Hindu belief in the transmigration of the soul that exists in most Indians puts on the garb of transmigration of the evil effects of the deceased person's soul, if not the soul itself.

c) Crude Popularisation of a Philosophical View

A commonsense view recognizes that every action of every individual has direct or indirect influence on the whole society, since all human beings and their lives are interlinked. Take for example the influence of discoveries and inventions by the individuals of the past on our lives. Or, the impact of wrong decisions by the authorities on the lives of the people such as those of Hitler, Mussolini or Osama Bin Laden. So philosophically and sociologically, every action has impact on the lives of the others. (Probably this is the real foundation of the theory of *karma*, which was later made very popular with imaginative views such as that

one who does not live according to one's call of life would be reborn as a lower type of being). But to attribute a direct, personalised and immediate link between the ancestor's wrongdoings and the offspring's problems in the present life is a kind of biological determinism. Why does such a shift from the commonsense view to deterministic view occur?

d) Failure of Conventional Explanations of Evil

Apparently no religion has given a fully satisfactory explanation to the existence of physical evil and the inclination towards moral evil in human beings. Explanations like "God allows evil for our purification", "Moral evil originates from original sin", "Suffering is the punishment for sins", "Suffering on earth earns for us reward in heaven", "Physical evil is the result of the finite nature of this universe" etc. have not satisfied most human beings intellectually or emotionally. Many people suffer without any apparent cause from their part. It is in the midst of such a cacophony of unsatisfactory explanations that the new teaching on the sins of ancestors and the bondage of souls has emerged as an easy consolation. If the suffering or evil that one undergoes today is the consequence of the past sins of the ancestors and if, in fact, at least some of them were not leading an ideal life, the individual gets a sure peg to hang one's problems. According to the new teaching, various kinds of mental illnesses, breakdown of families, alcoholism, drug addiction, promiscuity, suicidal tendency, epilepsy etc. are caused by the souls of the ancestors who are still in the bondage of sin. And while most of the conventional explanations indicated above do not offer any easy solution, the modern one does. According to the assurance given by the teachers of the new theory, the evil impact of the sins of the ancestors can be warded off with some prayers and rituals. Prayers and rituals, even if costly and elaborate, are attainable solutions unlike the 'trust in the mysterious providence of God', 'acceptance of original sin', 'hoping for the heavenly reward' etc. And those who follow the new teaching are satisfied that these prayers and rituals are capable of freeing the souls in bondage and helping them to attain heaven! Besides, they also feel the security that a sure and definite solution has been found for their own problems in life!!

e) *Guilt Feeling and the New Teaching*

Kerala at present is a transitional society. The society is fast changing from an agrarian society into an urban and commercial one. The extended family of the past is being replaced by the nuclear family of today in which the grown-up children are forced to live away from their parents on account of jobs. Thus a good number of the grown- up children of the present generation is unable to look after the parents in their old age. Till the last generation, the family used to live together and work together, and the present transition to nuclear families and the consequent difficulties in performing the conventional roles are creating a great deal of guilt-feeling in the children. On the one hand, they feel that they have to personally look after their parents and on the other hand, they are unable to do so due to the necessities of life. This pressure and consequent guilt-feeling and tensions are a major problem among them. Such feelings begin to disturb them more after the parents have disappeared and the children continue to carry the burden of the guilt-feeling. The modern teaching regarding the bondage of souls specifically addresses them and demands from them certain reparations in the form of prayers and other rituals for the souls of the ancestors. Whether the souls of their own parents have had serious sins or not, whether they are in actual bondage or not, the religious ceremonies give enough consolation to the children, imparting a feeling that at last they could do something to their parents, which unfortunately they could not during the latter's life-time. Thus the teaching becomes rather therapeutic in the case of those who are disturbed emotionally regarding their relationship with the parents, dead or alive.

f) *Facile Shift of Responsibility for One's Life to Another*

Most of the problems we face today in our personal as well as collective life are the result of our own irresponsible and wrong decisions (either of those who are currently living or those who took the wrong decisions in the past). Several examples may be shown: living beyond one's means and ending in debt, not getting trained and not sufficiently equipping oneself for a decent job, wrong decisions in business and other financial transactions, alcoholism, lack of control of one's life and consequent stress and strain in family relationships, break-down or even

break-up of family relations and so on. The reasonable solution is to correct one's behaviour pattern and straighten one's path to get rid of such problems. But that is quite hard to accept and even harder to put into practice. Recognizing this difficulty of the ordinary people, the modern sellers of easy solutions shift the responsibility to the sins and failures of the past generation and make the people do comparatively easier performance of some rituals and prayers.

Dangers of the Marketing

But there is another side to the coin. The main thrust of the teaching consists in the belief that the souls in bondage can be freed through the prayers of those who are living. In other words, those are dead can be converted and helped to reach heaven. Though apparently it is aimed at consoling the guilt- ridden children and at providing a satisfactory explanation to the unexplainable evils in life, it is not only blatantly against the Catholic teaching that the deceased cannot change their life but also dangerous to the present ethical life. If one has opportunity to change one's life even after death through the prayers of those who are living, he or she may not feel the need to lead an upright life today. It would seem that even if one leads an immoral life, he will finally attain heaven, if he can arrange to have someone pray for him and get him converted while he is in bondage after death. That is a sheer marketing technique.

Does Ignorance Have a Role?

Some complain that an important reason for the spread of such fundamentalist interpretations is ignorance. Hence, it is claimed, systematic and on-going education on the Bible can prevent most deviations. Even though adult catechesis on the Bible is necessary, ignorance does not seem to be the chief problem. We find that even educated people in the developed countries as well as in our own country subscribe to superstitious or erroneous beliefs not only in Christianity but also in other religions; creationism in the literal sense that many hold in USA, belief in rebirth by Western Christians, claims of clairvoyance, acceptance of the so called 'modern gom-men' etc. are some examples of popular beliefs even among knowledgeable persons. Besides, in the past, even though the people in Kerala were more ignorant about the

Bible, there were less popular interpretations and even less people dared to accept them; those were the days of total obedience to the Church. Hence we must search wider for explanations of problems like fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible.

From Church to Sect

The above given reflections were made from the point of view of the individuals who are making or accepting popular interpretations. The issue can be looked at from the side of the religious institution (e.g. the Church) also. A Church that supports, as we noted above, a meaning system of the generic type, is a fertile ground for the sprouting of contextualized meanings or interpretations, since generic messages satisfy intellect more than emotions and behaviours. As indicated above, there might occur a coalescence of some material interests together with the meaning interests. Thus, first, such interpretations appear in the views and behaviour of individuals who are inclined to emotionality. Some of them, if circumstances allow, go a step further and form sects or groups to sustain the radical beliefs and behaviour. It also helps them to regain the emotional bonding that they might be missing in large and formal parish communities, and even to gain some satisfaction of status interests. This is the `transformation social scientists´ (Ernst Troeltsch); some sociologists point out that the Church, by its very bureaucratic and formal nature, gives birth to sects.

To Respond to the Phenomenon

From a sociological point of view, two kinds of responses may be indicated for dealing with the situation. One, greater flexibility from the part of the Church in explaining the biblical message (as well as other teachings) as suitable to the varying needs of individuals in different life situations. It should help the people satisfy their need for drawing spiritual nourishment according to the fast changing exigencies of their daily life. Second, the Church personnel have to reach out to the people on a personal basis. That would create a comforting interpersonal bond, which most people seek in informal prayer groups. Even the gatherings of the

family units which were started for reaching out to individuals in smaller groups are gradually becoming very structured and impersonal so much so that personal sharing and emotional bonding are declining. Regarding the problem of superstitious beliefs on afterlife, the Church should be able to teach doctrines with definiteness and clarity and inspire the people to grow in trust in God. In other words, very clear and wide adult catechesis in Catholic doctrines is a must in modern times. The Catholic laity is in general ignorant of the contents of the Bible and is not trained enough to understand the obscure passages of the Bible. The Church in Kerala must initiate a state-wide drive through parishes and the media for a non-formal religious instruction of the grown-ups.

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Jesus and Rituals

Vincent Kundukulam

Rituals help man to order his life according to the dictates of transcendental power and that of the society. Dr. Vincent Kundukulam, professor of Religious Sciences at the Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, explains the functional meanings of religious rituals, and shows how they are misused for political ends in the different religious traditions. The author also tries to argue that the rituals can be brought back to play their founding roles if man is ready to apply to them the phenomenological approach that Jesus adopted towards the Jewish rituals of his time.

Rituals of different kinds are basic to man and society. They are also fundamental to all religions. Religions like Hinduism, despite being challenged by the doctrinal controversies from within and by Christianity and Islam from outside, survived throughout the centuries due to the observance of rituals. The *bhakti marga* in Hinduism is the reservoir of traditions, customs and rituals for the devotee to get united with the transcendental powers and to derive from them the strength to face the problems of life.

Just as religious rituals have been salvific to humanity they have been also objects of discord and separation in religions. The controversies in the context of the religious practices among different castes in Hinduism and the different ways of celebrating the liturgy in the Christian churches point to the complexity of handling rituals. Dealing with rituals is very delicate because they are entwined with man's identity. Their determined mode of action has something to say about the existence and belief systems of the individual and the society.

If on the one hand, religious rituals are sublime for man's life and on the other hand, akin to disputes there emerge serious questions regarding their nature and function. What are the factors taken into account while constructing rituals? How are the rituals to be used for social cohesion without instigating ghettoization? Can we embrace them as 'identity building devices' without compromising the spiritual values they signify? In this short article it is not our ambition to answer all these questions. We only want to understand how Jesus interpreted the rituals so as to keep them both as genuine channels of God-experience and building kingdom values in the society. But the scientific and contextual concerns require that we first dwell briefly upon the concept of religious ritual and the fact of ritualistic perversions.

1. Religious Ritual

Many of the leading Anglo-Saxon anthropologists like A. R. Radcliff-Brown, Talcott Parsons and Bronislaw Malinowski understand ritual from the functional perspective. According to them rituals are adaptive and adjusting responses to the needs of the individual and society. Rituals express the belief system of the society which is based on the classification of reality into two: the sacred and the profane. They provide proper rules for action in the realms of the sacred as well as make bridges of passing into the realm of the profane.[1]

Understanding from the functional view point, religious rituals help humans to adjust themselves to life's uncertainties and dangers, and to control their behaviour in accordance with the transcendental order. People feel intense anxiety when they are at the limits of their analytical capacities and moral insights. By way of celebrating the puzzles, ambiguities and paradoxes of life the religious rituals make people think that there is reason for the tragedies in life. Thus the rituals function as formal and stylized enactments of religious beliefs with symbolic meanings.

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1. Ritual, in: *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol.15, William Benton Publisher, Chicago, 1980, p. 864.

Emile Durkheim, who made studies on the Australian aboriginal groups, arrived at interesting findings regarding the social forces of religious rituals. In his work, "The Elementary Form of Religious Life" (1912) he explains how the rituals related to the worship of Totem[2] signifies reverence towards God and society. The totemic principle, the God of the clan, can be nothing less than the clan itself. It stands for the values central to the community. Under the form of the animal or vegetable totem the aborigines personify the aspiration of their own community. Rituals reinforce the norms and values of clan by adding a sacred dimension to activities of social life. They bolster social solidarity by gathering people to affirm their common bonds and by recalling their social heritage. For example, the ancestor worship among the clans strengthens the attitude of respect of the son for his father and of the younger brother for the elder one. Participation in rituals heightens the feeling of being part of something larger than oneself.[3]

In the aboriginal culture the totemic rituals help people not merely to fortify their social unity. They take the individuals away from the profane life into an elevated sphere in which they feel intimacy with the higher forces. Such higher forces attributed to Totem are really the expression of the influence of the collectivity over the individual. Through the enactment of religious rituals their object of worship thus moves from Totem into the society itself. In this act of worshipping the society through Totem the individuals derive strength to adjust to the major changes in their lives and thus become a powerful group capable of facing altered circumstances in nature and world.[4]

2. Perversion of Religious Rituals

The above treatise shows that rituals function in a twofold manner. On the one hand, by creating feelings of respect, awe or dread they

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2. Totem is an animal or other natural object that is chosen and respected as a special symbol of a tribe or family, especially among Native Americans.

3 Richar J. Gelles & Ann Levine, *Sociology an Introduction*, McGraw-Hill College, New York, 199, pp. 487-488.

4 Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 200, p. 443.

place the individual in relation to the sacred and on the other hand, by fostering the customs and values of the society they make the community a powerful group. We also notice that rituals don't have existence of their own apart from humans. They carry meanings attributed to them by the society.

The neutral nature of rituals enables them to be either constructive or destructive according to the circumstances. They become vulnerable to violence when people with special interests use them to attain their objectives under the guise of divine commission. What we read in the book of Exodus about the tenth plague – the death of the firstborn – could be read, from a historical point of view, as an indication of violent attack that took place against the Egyptians in course of the liberation struggles of the Israelites.[5] Moses' instruction to the elders of Israel gives the impression that everything was well known to him in advance: "None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts the Lord will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down" (Ex 12, 22b – 23). Here the term 'destroyer' throws light on a third party apart from the Lord who must have been involved in the massacre of the firstborn. Who are these destroyers?

In the following verses Moses asks the elders to continue the observance of the Passover rite and educate their children about it once they reach the Promised Land. "And when your children ask you, 'what do you mean by this observance?' you shall say, 'It is the pass over sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses," (Ex 12, 26-27). Reading this passage we get the impression that Moses and Aaron make a teleological interpretation of the exodus event. Though it is not evident from the text that it was the Israelites who executed the slaughter, we can't also easily believe that Yahweh would organize such

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5 In this regard I am inspired by the analysis made by Ignatius Jesudasan in his article "Non-Violent Rituals as Symbols of a Violent History", *VJTR* 69 (2005), pp. 197-201.

a bloodbath against the Egyptians who are also 'his people' (Is 19, 25). It is probable that the massacre of the first born happened in course of Israelites' fight for freedom and that their leaders, reading it through the eyes of faith, formed a version of the event emphasizing the providence of Yahweh for the elected people. Anyhow it is obvious that the free nation of Israelites was born out of a very violent massacre.

To take another example of our time and of a different religious environment let us examine the fabrication of politico-religious rituals by the Hindutva forces in the recent decades. Since the early 80s the RSS-BJP-VHP alliances in India impose special religious rituals on all Hindus with an objective of gaining their cohesion and consequently capturing political power in the country. The center of Hindutva rituals is Ayodhya. They devised sacrifices and *yatras* to encompass every corner and each individual of Hindu India. Some of them were *Ekmata Yajna* in 1983,

Shri Ramjanaki Janambhoomi Yatra in 1984, several *rathyatras* in 1985-89, the *Shila Pujas* and *Shilanya* ceremonies at Ayodhya in 1989 and Advani's *rathyatra* in 1990. Some of these *yatras* and Pujas were consciousness raising tours. During some others, people were asked to contribute a brick, a rupee, or a bottle of Ganga water. Along with these rituals they ordered the Hindus to paste small icons like the sticker and lockets displaying Ram or the temple or Om symbol on vehicles, offices, houses and school blackboards. During the *karseva* campaign all Hindu houses were asked to fly the saffron flag.[6]

There is no need to multiply examples to show how the religious rituals have been perversely used by several groups with vested interests all throughout the history. Behind the battle for freedom there is often legitimized retaliatory violence to counter the violence which is unjustly inflicted upon them. Now our objective is to examine Jesus' approach towards the religiousrituals. Did Jesus follow strictly the Jewish rituals? What mattered for him in rituals? What novelty he brought in? Response to these questions can bring in some light to set about the religious rituals.

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6 *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 60-63.

3. Attitude of Jesus

3.1. Jesus was not anti-ritualistic

To state that Jesus was against all religious rituals contradicts the truth of the gospels. Several instances from his public life attest that he followed the general traditions of the Jewish community. As regards the religious practices in his personal life, the evangelists note that he received baptism according to the Jewish custom (Mk 1, 9-11), he attended the gatherings at Synagogues (Lk 4, 15), he visited the Jerusalem temple on feast days (Jn 2, 13; Jn 5,1; Jn 7, 14; Jn 8, 2), he celebrated the Passover (Mk 14, 12-16), and so on.

He respected the social laws too. To the Pharisees and Herodians who asked him, 'is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' Jesus said, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's" (Mk 12, 13-17). Again, in order to give the half-shekel temple tax which was collected in Galilee prior to Passover he asked Peter to caste a hook into the sea and find the money for it (Mt 17, 24-27). Giving these taxes he identified himself as one dedicated to the social rituals of his society. His attitude towards the law is clear in the statement: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Mt 5, 17).

3.2. Not ritualistic like the Pharisees

But at the same time indications are many in the Bible to think that Jesus was not having the same disposition of the Pharisees, Scribes or Priests in keeping the rituals. In the periscope cited just above where Mathew affirms Jesus' intention to fulfill the law of Moses, he also quotes the following words of Jesus: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5, 20). Jesus' dissatisfaction of Pharisaic attitude towards the rituals is obviously articulated by Mathew all throughout the chapter 23 and in particular, as follows: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them ... For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you

make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (Mt 23, 13-15).

How did Jesus distinguish himself from the teachers of his time in dealing with the religious rituals? One thing special about Jesus was that he gave less importance to the outward manifestations of rituals. He warned his disciples: "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Mt 6,1). Similarly his teaching on prayer was quite different: "Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and all the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward" (Mt 6, 5). Again with regard to fasting we read in Mathew: "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward" (Mt 6, 16). As these citations indicate, Jesus warned that those who practiced rituals without letting the inward conversion might lose the heaven.

3.3. *Phenomenological approach*

I feel that Jesus' approach to rituals could be termed as phenomenological. Phenomenon is a thing as it appears to us. Phenomenology is a science that applies the method of abstracting the essence of a thing from the contents of experience.[7] The quest for essential in experience requires a method of eliminating the factual dimensions or the contingent features of our experience of the phenomenon. Edmund Husserl, the pioneer of phenomenological approach, refers to 'epoche', the process of purifying the experience to discover the essence. It consists in bracketing the boundary conditions of an experience. Once the phenomenological reductions are done we can find out the real meaning of things around us.[8]

7. Thomas Mautner (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p. 241.

8. W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, Humanities Press, London, 1995, pp. 238-239.

Jesus approach was phenomenological in the sense that his focus was not on the things that affected man from outside. He paid attention to the interior aspects of human existence. He said: "there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile" (Mk 7,15). He condemned those who gave importance to the external realization of rituals: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law; justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel (Lk 11, 42). Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean" (Lk 11, 39-40).

In other words, Jesus' phenomenological approach consisted in disassociating the non-essentials from the essentials in traditions. In the Gospel of Mark we find Jesus curing the man with withered hand on the day of Sabbath (Mk 3, 1-6) in order to teach the Pharisees that Sabbath is for man and not vice versa. He invited his compatriots to get into the essence of realities. To attain this objective, he delinked the message of rituals from their rubrics. Over the issue of disciples plucking grain on the day of Sabbath, Jesus says: "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice', you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath" (Mt 12, 1- 8).

Yes, for Jesus the essential feature of ritual is to make man unified with the will of His Father and to enable the people practice the kingdom values like mercy and justice. He complained of the Pharisees and Scribes who ignored such founding objectives of rituals. "This people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me" (Mk 7, 6-7). Being united with God does not mean to ensure merely a pious attitude towards him. Intimacy with God has to be reflected in doing the will of God: "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7, 21).

At several occasions Jesus revealed that what made man great was the readiness to do the will of God. When the crowd reminded him about his mother and brothers waiting for him, he said: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" and continued, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3, 33-35). With regard to the question, 'which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus appreciated the answer of the scribe who said that love of God and love of neighbour are much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mk 12, 28-34). This may be the reason why in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus without giving any reference to the observance of rituals, invited his audience to practice the values that the rituals stand for in order to inherit heaven. He says that the heirs of the kingdom of God would be those who thirst for righteousness, those who are merciful, those who are pure in heart and those who are peace-makers (Mt 5, 6-9).

Influence of politics and market on religion has great impact on religious rituals today. They go astray from their voracious goals and become easily objects of religious manipulation. We have to be therefore constantly on guard against identifying the non-essentials with the essentials in religions. In this venture, Jesus' approach to the Jewish rituals will be of great help. Bring back the rituals to fulfill their founding objectives i.e. to strengthen our bond with the sacred and to form a value based society, and that is one of the difficult challenges of our epoch.

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Vatican II and Other Religions
Time to Move off the Bridge?[1]

Paul F. Knitter

Dr. Paul F. Knitter, formerly Professor at Xavier University, Cincinnati, now Professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, makes a far-sighted reflection on the future of the Christian attitudes to other religions. Vat. II built a bridge, now we need the courage to cross the bridge and explore the diverse paths of the Spirit beyond. This would mean the discovery of the Divine, whom we meet in Christ, present in other religions. Christianity and other religions will then mutually interact in affirming and challenging each other. Knitter argues for a pneumatological reorientation in Christology.

The question I would like to explore in this essay stems from an observation that John Hick (who passed away just this year) made many years ago: Hick considered Vatican II's assessment of other religions to be a bridge – a marvelous bridge in that it represented something that had never before existed in official Church proclamations. But he also teasingly pointed out that the purpose of a bridge is to get to the other side. From his perspective, the leaders of the Catholic Church were bold enough to construct this bridge, but not bold enough to cross it. It's about time, Hick urged, to get off the bridge and move on![2]

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[1] This is a revised version of "Bridge or Boundary?" in *Vatican II Forty Years Later,* William Madges, ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006, pp. 261-82.

[2] John Hick, "Whatever Path Men Choose Is Mine," in *Christianity and Other Religions,* John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 180-81.

With Hick, I'm asking whether the Catholic/Christian community can move beyond Vatican II's marvelous, revolutionary theology of religions. This is a theology that affirms "elements that are true and good" in other religions (LG 16), "precious things, both religious and human" (GS 92), "elements of truth and grace" (AG 9), "spiritual and moral goods" (NA 2), "seeds of the Word" (AG 11, 15), "rays of that Truth which illumines all humankind" (NA 2) – a theology that calls upon all Catholics "prudently and lovingly" to engage in dialogue with other believers (NA 2). Such admissions and invocations represent, as has often been noted, a bold step forward in Christian relations with other faiths.

But the Council said more. It went on to affirm that since Jesus Christ is the one and only savior of all humanity, all these "precious things", all this "truth and grace", are there as a "preparation for the Gospel" (LG 16); they are meant to be "included" or "fulfilled" in the one Church of Jesus, the one religion that God intends, ideally, for all peoples of all times.

Beyond Vatican II

So my question is: Might the Catholic community now say more than what was said in Vatican II? In many ways, in developments since 1965, it has. The Magisterium itself has moved forward: what was left open in the Council has been affirmed by John Paul II and by the Council for Interreligious Dialogue – that is, that the religions themselves can serve as "ways of salvation";[3] also, the Magisterium has proclaimed dialogue – authentic, mutually enriching and challenging dialogue – to be an essential piece of the Church's mission to the world.[4]

But there has been no movement beyond the basics of what we can call "the fulfillment model". Official magisterial statements *Redemptoris Missio, Dialogue and Proclamation*, and especially *Dominus Iesus* – together with restraining actions toward theologians

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[3] Ibid., 81-82.

[4] See *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 136-40.

such as Jacques Dupuis, Tissa Balassuriya, Roger Haight -- have clearly and aggressively mounted "no trespassing" signs on territory beyond the fulfillment model.[5]

Again, my question is: Do these "no trespassing" signs really indicate where the community of Catholics (and of many other Christians) really are? Or where they want to be, or need to be? Have many Christians already moved off the bridge? Is it time for more theologians and Church leaders to follow?

But move off the bridge to what? How would one describe the new territory on the other side of the bridge? I suggest tha it would be an ecclesial environment in which Christians would affirm what Nostra Aetate declared – that it is imperative for religious people to work together, to talk to each other, to share responsibilities for promoting the well-being of people and planet – in other words, to authenically and fruitfully *dialogue* with each other It would be a way of engaging other religious believes without any claims of religious superiority – of "my religion is better than yours" or "intended by God to fulfill and absorb yours." The central concern is collaboration rather than competition. In this new territory, on the other side of the bridge of Vatican II, religious believers would remain true to their own distinct identities; they would eagerly give witness to what they hold to be true in their own experience and revelation. But they would also recognize the distinct, valid religious identity of others, and they would be open to learning from the witness of others.

Without entering into the controversy about "models for a theology of religions," I do believe that such a truly dialogical way of relating to other religions seems to me to be best supported by what has been called the perspectives of *pluralism* – or the term I prefer, *mutuality*.

So now my question becomes more pointed: Can Catholics cross the bridge of Vatican II toward such a mutualist theology of religions? Such a crossing would, no doubt, be a major shift in formal magisterial

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[5] And, we might add, the borders are clearly marked in the book of then Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI: Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004).

teaching. But I do believe that such a crossing would also be an example of what Catholics call "the development of dogma".

I believe we can, and must, admit to a development or evolution within the Catholic Church's understanding of other religions, which means also her understanding of herself. Briefly, in terms of Christology: for much of the history of the Church, the approach to other religions has been one of "Christ *against* the religions". Other religious paths were viewed as either diabolical or as useless; they would have to be *replaced* by Christianity. Outside the Church, no salvation; so the goal was to get everyone inside. But that was to change. Already with the Council of Trent, but especially in Vatican II, doctrine developed and shifted to view other traditions from the perspective of "Christ *within* the religions". Universally, cosmically, anonymously, Christ and his Spirit are recognized as working salvifically within other religions, providing them with grace and truth, preparing them for fulfillment in the Church. That's where we are now, officially.

I'm asking: is a further step possible, even necessary. This would be a perspective of "Christ *together with* the religions", one in which Christianity and all religions, mutually interact in affirming each other, challenging each other, and collaborating to further the well-being of humanity and the earth. No one religion would be in a universal or final sense, *superior* over all the others, although in particular issues or contexts, one religious belief/practice can show itself, in the dialogue, to be more "life-giving" and therefore preferable over another.

Reasons for Crossing the Bridge

So let me now first try to summarize what I think are three forces or reasons that are urging us to cross the bridge and move beyond Vatican II. Then I'd like to suggest some theological maps with which we can explore the pluralistic-mutualist territory on the other side of the bridge.

1. The Sensus Fidelium

As I've already suggested, we theologians (working always with the bishops and they with us) have got to come up with some better answers for how Christians are to understand the uniqueness or

distinctiveness of Christianity and of Christ in a world of many religions. Why? Mainly because Christian believers keep asking the question. Certainly in the United States and Europe, and from what I hear perhaps even more so in India, many such believers don't seem to be happy with the answers they have received or are receiving.[6] And judging from what I heard from my fellow parishioners at St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in Cincinnati and now in my Ascension parish in Manhattan -- and from my students both earlier at Xavier University and now at Union Theological Seminary – the primary cause of their uneasiness is all the "one and only", "King of kings", "one true Church" language that they hear in the liturgy and catechism. Just as there are many Catholics (some 70 percent in the US?) who just can't believe or practice the Church's official teaching on artificial contraception, so there are many Catholics who have difficulties in believing that theirs is the only Savior and the one true Church meant for all. Marcus Borg may be overstating it, but not by much, when he observes: "We are living in a time when many Christians are beginning to let go of exclusivist and absolutist claims…I am convinced that there are millions of mainline Christians in North America for whom the statement that Christianity is *not* the only true religion is 'good news'."[7]

Yes, I'm talking primarily from my experience in North America and Europe. And yes, I know that things might be different in the South, where Christians/Catholics now outnumber their "godparents" in the North. Perhaps in Africa. But I'm not so sure about Asia. One of the strong messages that the Asian Bishops, speaking for their people and their theologians, delivered to Rome before and during their Synod of 1998 was that the traditional ways of understanding the uniqueness of

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[6] So Peter Phan is right when he wrote in *Theological Studies,* "…essential theological issues such as the locus of divine revelation, the role of Christ as the universal and unique savior, the function of the Church as the necessary means of salvation, the role of non-Christian religions as possible ways of salvation, and the nature and purpose of Christian mission, are far from being settled." "Cultures, Religions, and Power: Proclaiming Christ in the United States Today," *Theological Studies* 65 (2004) 728-29

[7] "Jesus and Buddhism: A Christian View," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 19 (1999), 96.

Jesus, or Rome's insistence that Jesus be proclaimed as the one and only savior, just weren't working, pastorally and therefore theologically, in Asia. It didn't fit their understanding of a dialogical Church, which, as the bishops insisted, is the only way to authentically be Church in Asia.[8] In the opinion of many, John Paul II's report on the Synod in his Encyclical *Ecclesia in Asia* did not really hear or respond to these concerns.[9] – I think we can say that also in Asia the *Sensus Fidelium* is itching for new answers.

2. Tensions between Practice and Theory

Elsewhere, already some years back, I tried to describe a tension within the Catholic Church that, in our present context, has become only more evident.[10] It's the same tension between theory and praxis that has appeared throughout the history of the Church in the form of the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* – between the practical norms for prayer/spirituality and the theoretical norms for belief. Today in the Catholic Church I think we're experiencing a tension between the *lex dialogandi* and the *lex credendi* – between the practice of dialogue with other religions and the theory or theology of other religions.

Ever since *Nostra Aetate* gave orders to pursue dialogue " prudently and lovingly" with persons of other faiths, Catholics, obedient as they generally are, have been doing just that. In many ways, the Catholic Church has become – especially in Asia but not only in Asia – a Church in dialogue with other religious traditions, both on the official level in the activities of the previous Pope and of the Vatican Council for Interreligious Dialogue, but also, and more significantly, on the grassroots level in dioceses and parishes around the world. And here we have the source of the

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[8] Knitter, *Introducing,* 96-98.

[9] See Edmund Chia, "FABC, Interreligious Dialogue and the Asian Synod," in *Manila Forum on the Asian Synod* (Geneva: Pax Romana ICMICA Asia, 1998), 173-81; John Masford Prior,"A Tale of Two Synods," *Vidyajyoti* 62 (1998) 654-65 . Tom C. Fox. *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 185-97.

[10] "Catholics and Other Religions: Bridging the Gap between Dialogue and Theology." Louvain Studies 24 (1999) 319-54.

tension. Catholic Christians are discovering that their beliefs about other religions don't fit, or don't support, their experience in the dialogue with them; this discovery comes both intellectually and interpersonally, that is, in the form of both questions and feelings.

The questions have to do with the nature and process of dialogue. John Paul II in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) and the Council for Interreligious Dialogue, together with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in their statement *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP) are astoundingly clear about what are the requirements for authentic dialogue: 1) Dialogue is "a method and means of *mutual* knowledge and enrichment" in which "a witness [is] *given and received* for mutual advancement." (RM 55, 56). 2) In dialogue "Christians too must allow themselves to be questioned" and corrected (DP 32) since "other constitute a positive challenge to the Church." (RM 56). 3) In the dialogue, all sides must be ready to change their minds and even their religious identities, for "...the decision may be made to leave one's previous spiritual or religious situation in order to direct oneself toward another." (DP 41).[11]

But, many Catholics are asking themselves, explicitly or implicitly, how is such openness, such mutual enrichment, such readiness to learn and even to change possible, if Catholics are supposed to enter the circle of dialogue with the theological conviction that God has given them the full and the final truth and the only source of God's saving grace. How can one learn anything, or be ready to change, if one thinks he/she already has the God- given final word on all truth? At the most, one could only understand more clearly what one already has.

But these are the theoretical or intellectual problems. The personal issues are more pressing and telling. Catholics in America and Europe have come to experience what Catholics in Asia have long known: They have made interreligious friends. Other believers are not just strangers

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[11] For texts and commentary on the Vatican's new understanding of dialogue, see Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names,* 136-40.

who follow different ways. Rather, they have become friends whom we like, esteem, value. Through these Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American friends, Catholics have come to see and understand things about the world, themselves, the Divine that they never would have known in and through Jesus alone. They have discovered what Edward Schillebeeckx so succinctly describes: There is more truth in many religions than there can be in any one, Christianity included.[12] How, in the light of such experiences, can Catholics continue to affirm what they have been taught: that in Christ they have the full and final revelation, that theirs is the superior path meant for all. Such talk, such attitudes, it seems, are foreign to friends. Friends don't claim that one is superior to the other. Yes, they want to learn from each other, but no one friend claims or thinks s/he has the final word in all differences.

Our theology of religions, I believe, has to catch up with our dialogue with religions.

And in one particular instance it has. In one particular form of interreligious dialogue and relationship, the Catholic Church has already crossed the bridge! I'm talking about the new relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with the Jews, as that relationship has been revised and developed since *Nostra Aetate*. In NA's section on Judaism, especially in its explicit statement (based on Rom. 11) that "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" and that therefore the covenant with the Jews retains its validity also after Christ, the Council did what John Pawlikowski terms "an about- face" on the supersessionist theology of Judaism that characterized most of the Church's history.[13]

John Paul II carried this "mutualist" theology of Judaism even further in numerous talks in which he stated that the covenant with the

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[12] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 166-67.

[13] John Pawlikowski, "Vatican II's Theological About –face on the Jews: Not Yet Fully Recognized," *The Ecumenist*, 37 (2000) 4-6.,

Jews was "never revoked by God"[14] and that therefore Jews and Christians are "partners in a covenant of eternal love which was never revoked"[15] and are "to be a blessing to one another."[16] Gregory Baum holds that "Implicit in the conciliar statement [and more so in John Paul's statements] is a totally new attitude towards the Jews: the Church has no intention of converting them to the Christian faith; it wants Jews to remain faithful to their own spiritual tradition...."[17] What was implicit for Baum, Cardinal Kasper makes explicit: "[there] does not exist any Catholic missionary organization for the Jews. There is dialogue with Jews; no mission in this proper sense of the word towards them."[18]

In this new dialogical "praxis" with the Jews in which Catholics have abandoned supersessionism and recognized the ongoing validity of Judaism (without having to convert to Christ), there is, at least implicitly, what we might call a "paradigm shift" in Christology and ecclesiology. In John Pawlikowski's measured words:

> The extent to which we create theological space for Jewish faith, against which Christianity had defined its identity, to that extent we moderate, albeit implicitly, the absolute claim of Christianity .... the Vatican is well aware that formally to relinquish evangelical outreach to the Jews has profound Christological implications that it is unwilling to confront at this time.[19]

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14. Address to the Jewish community of Mainz, Germany, Nov. 17, 1980; this statement is found in the document of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* (June 24, 1985), no. 3.

15. Address to Jewish leaders in Miami, Sept. 11, 1987

16. Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, April 6. 1993.

17. Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 111.

18. Cardinal Walter Kasper in his commentary on *Dominus Iesus,* section 3, quoted in Philip A. Cunningham, "Implications for Catholic Magisterial Teaching on Jews and Judaism," in *Sic et Non: Encountering* Dominus Iesus, Stephen J. Pope and Charles Hefling, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 4 148

19. Pawlikowski, 5

But, according to Pawlikowski, it is not just the Vatican who is afraid to draw the theological-Christological consequences from this new dialogical praxis with the Jews. His further words lose some of their measured reserve:

> The rethinking of the Christ-Event which this [i.e. the new view of Judaism in NA] demands has been avoided by most theologians, including the authors of radical theologies writing from a feminist or Third World perspective. Regrettably, the Church has undertaken little theological reflection exploring the meaning and power of *Nostra aetate* for the revision of Christology and ecclesiology in keeping with God's abiding covenant with the Jews.[20]

We might say that in its dialogical praxis with Jews, and in the theology implicit in that praxis, the Church has made a first, rather timid, foray across the bridge of Vatican II -- but at the moment it does not have the clarity or the gumption to send further explorers.

3. Religion and Violence

A third reason why Catholics should move across the bridge of Vatican II is political; and I believe it is more of an incentive than an imperative, but an incentive that might be more impelling than any air-tight theological argument. It has to do with a reality that we are all disconcertingly aware of, especially since 9/11: the link between religion and violence.

There is no doubt that religion can be a key reason why people fly planes into buildings or drop bombs on cities and villages. To say that such people who justify their violence in the name of Allah/God – be they terrorists or imperialists – are *misusing* religion may be true. But to leave it there is also much too facile. It lets religious people, and especially religious leaders and theologians, off the hook much too easily. We must ask: *why* has it been, and *why* is it today, so easy for demagogues or

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[20] Ibid. 6 Cunningham fully agrees: "...the Catholic community has not yet integrated its recent recognition of God's perpetual covenant with Israel into its theologies of Christ, church, salvation." ("Implications," 140).

ideologues or ayatollahs or presidents to call upon religious faith and feelings in order to justify and intensify violence. What is it in the teachings, the beliefs, the scriptures of religions that makes it so easy for people to beat the plowshares of religious faith into the swords of religious violence?

As a raft of recent studies are claiming, one of the reasons why religion today, as throughout history, is producing more swords than plowshares has to do with exclusive or superior truth claims.[21] I'm not saying please understand, that there is a neat, necessary causal link between superior truth claims and violence. But there *is* a link, call it facilitating, or conducive, or condoning. If I feel that God has given me the "only Savior," or the "final prophet" or the "supreme enlightenment," and if I also feel that other people are attacking or exploiting or suppressing – either through terrorist tactics or imperial might – this religion or culture that is the bearer of God's only or superior truth, I will feel obliged to defend, by any means I have at my disposal, God's highest truth. – True, "*abusus non tollit usum*" – abuse does not prevent use; but when there is, and has been, so much abuse of superior truth claims, we must question their use.

I offer you the observations of an interreligious friend of mine, Rita Gross, who tells us what claims to have the only or the highest truth look like to a Buddhist:

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[21] Previous to 9/11: Mark Jergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). Post 9/11: Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (HarperSanfrancisco, 2002). Lloyd Steffen, *The Demonic Turn: The Power of Religion to Inspire or Restrain Violence* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003). Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002). Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003). Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (New York: Alta Mira Press 2003). Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

The result of exclusive truth claims is not religious agreement; it is suffering. The track record of religions that claim exclusive and universal truth for themselves is not praiseworthy or uplifting. How much empire building, how many crusades and religious wars, big and small, have gone on in the name of defending the 'one true faith.' There seems to be a cause and effect link between claims of exclusive truth and suffering; or to say it more strongly, the main result of exclusive truth claims has been suffering, not salvation.[22]

Exploring the Other Side of the Bridge

Hoping that these three considerations – the *sensus fidelium*, the need for theological theory to catch up with dialogical practice, and the problem of religion and violence – are valid reasons to begin our crossing of the Vatican II bridge, let me now sketch – more I cannot do – some theological maps that might help us explore the other side without losing our Christian way.

1. A Pneumatological Theology of Religions

In surveying the present *status quaestionis* of a Christian theology of religions, I see a growing number of theologians taking up the advice that Karl Rahner offered back in the 80's – to make "pneumatology ...the fundamental point of departure for its entire theology [of religions] and then attempt from this point ... to gain a real and radical understanding

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[22] Rita Gross, "Excuse Me, But What's the Question? Isn't Religious Diversity Normal?" in *The Myth of Religious Superiority* (See Note 6), 75-87. – According to Gregory Baum, it was precisely this danger of violence between Islam and Christianity – the specter of a "clash of civilizations" that moved John Paul II "to give full support to the United Nations project promoting 'the dialogue of civilizations'." The Pope, according to Baum, implicitly endorsed the promotion of dialogue rather than the seeking of conversion as the ideal of Muslim-Christian relations. In doing so, he "transcended the theology of Vatican II." The specter of religious violence, in other words, pushed the Pope to the other side of the bridge, in practice though not in theology. *Amazing Church,* 122-23.

of Christology."[23] Back then, Rahner already felt what today is being called "the Christological impasse" in working out a theology of religions. In the words of Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong, "The Christian dialogue with other religious traditions has stalled at the christological impasse on more than one occasion..."[24] It's the uniqueness question – or what then Cardinal Ratzinger called "the unicity of Christ" -- that keeps tripping up theologians or getting them into trouble. So pneumatology – which Rahner described in the passage just cited as "a teaching of the inmost, divinizing gift of grace for all human beings"[25] – might be a way around the impasse.

But as Yong and others point out, it will be such a helpful route only if we take seriously an ingredient of our traditional Trinitarian theology that can be epitomized in the patristic image of "the two hands of the Father." Viewed *ad intra*, there are two really different processions within the Trinitarian life of God. *Ad extra*, there are two truly different, but always related, movements or missions by which the infinite parental Source of life reaches into the world to embrace and save it. One, Christians have found incarnated intimately in the person of Jesus the Christ. The other is the brooding Spirit of God who has hovered over and inspired creation from its very inception. So "...while the person of Jesus Christ is a historical symbol of God's reality in the world, the Holy Spirit

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[23] "Aspects of European Theology," in *Theological Investigations* Vol. XXI (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 97-98 [78-98]. Among those who are following Rahner's advice: Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Scheffield: Scheffield Academic Pess, 2000); Gavin D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000); Michael Amaladoss, "Listen to the Spirit: 'The Father is Greater than I' (John 14.28)", *Vidyajyoti* 63 (1999) 687-89; Michael Ipgrave, *Trinity and Inter-Faith Dialogue: Plenitude and Plurality* ("Religions and Discourse" Series, James M.M. Francis, ed., Vol. 14) (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), Peter Hodgson, "The Spirit and Religious Pluralism," in *The Myth of Religious Superiority* (See Note 6), 135-49. Paul F. Knitter, "A New Pentecost? A Pneumatological Theology of Religions," *Current Dialogue*, Jan. 1991, pp. 32-41.

[24] Yong, *Discerning,* 60, see also 25, 226, 288.

[25] Rahner, loc. cit.

is par excellence the symbol of the divine presence and activity in the cosmic realm."[26]

The problem with many of the recent efforts to fashion a pneumatological or Trinitarian theology of religions is – allow me to put it this way – that they end up tinged with the heresy of subordinationism. After speaking eloquently and profusely of the revealing, saving presence of the Spirit in the religious world, theologians like Gavin D'Costa end up insisting that whatever is disclosed by the Spirit must be "measured and discerned by their conformity to and in their illumination of Christ ... Jesus is the normative criterion of God."[27] Jacques Dupuis was more explicit: "Christ, not the Spirit, is at the center as the way to God."[28] I believe the conclusion of Amos Yong is hard to refute: Such "...failure to differentiate between the two economies inevitably risks the subordination of the mission of the Spirit to that of the Son, and ultimately to an ecclesiological definition of soteriology."[29] More forcefully, he speaks of a "denigration" or a "domination" of the Spirit by the Son.[30]

So I do want to affirm a pneumatological route around the Christological impasse.[31] But it must be a pneumatology that is soundly and consistently Trinitarian – one that recognizes the difference between the Trinitarian persons, processions, and missions. This means that what the Spirit is up to in other religions may be truly and perhaps surprisingly different from what has been revealed in the Incarnate Word. God's revelation through the Spirit in the religions cannot be reduced to what

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[26] Yong, *Discerning,* 29.

[27] D'Costa, "Christ, the Trinity, and Religious Pluralism," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions,* Gavin D'Costa, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 23. See also, D'Costa, *The Meeting,* 114.

[28] Jacque Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 197.

[29] *Discerning,* 64

[30] Ibid. 319, 320.

[31] And here we are following the lead of John Paul II, whose "singular contribution ... to a theology of religions," according to Jacques Dupuis was his insistence on taking seriously "the operative presence of the Spirit of God in the religious life of non-Christians...." *Toward,* 171

God has revealed in Jesus. Michael Amaladoss therefore offers this advice: "The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. But she does not just repeat what Jesus has done in the Christian community. Otherwise, the other religions would not be different. Perhaps, together with the phrase, 'the Father is greater than I,' we must take another phrase, 'The Spirit is not I,' though we may not find it in this form in the Bible."[32]

But what is truly different in the Spirit's activity in other religions will always be intimately related to the Incarnate Word's revelation in Jesus. The Spirit may be saying something new, something beyond the Good News of Jesus, but it will connect with the Good News, so that between the two very different revelations, as between the two very different Persons of the Trinity, there will be an exciting, life-giving *perichoresis* – a dancing together and a transformative acting together. I believe that a synonym for such *perichoresis* is dialogue.

2. A Dialogical Christology

But Rahner suggested, as we heard, that after the Spirit helps us around the impasse of Christology, she will also assist us "to gain a real and radical understanding of Christology." – I believe that this is exactly what is happening within Christian theology today. In an effort to carry on the ongoing task of Christology in relation to religious pluralism, or more precisely, in an effort to link Christology to a pneumatological theology of religions, theologians are reinterpreting, renewing, revising their understanding of Christ; they are coming to new ways of appreciating the uniqueness or unicity of Christ as savior and Son of God. Such efforts, I believe, can be summarized and described under one heading: we're moving toward a more *dialogical Christology*. Such a Christology provides another roadmap for exploring the other side of the Vatican II bridge.

For me, the most incisive and inspiring way to get at the content and intent of a dialogical Christology is John B. Cobb, Jr.'s simple witness of faith: "Christ is the Way that is open to other ways."[33] We cannot follow

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[32] "Listen to the Spirit" (see Note 25), 687-89.

[33] John B. Cobb, Jr., "Beyond Pluralism," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (See Note 29), 91.

Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life unless we are also learning about other ways, exploring other truths, entering other lives. Christian discipleship is essentially, imperatively, *dialogical*. Relationships with others – with those who have other views and follow other paths - is essential not just to faithfully follow Christ and his message but to *understand* Christ and his message. As Michael Barnes puts it: "It is impossible to be Christian 'without the others'...Christian living ... depends not on occupying a 'place' alongside others, but on practicing faith face to face with others, ...by constantly departing for another place....to be Christian is to exist in relationship...."[34]

Such a dialogical Christology is being developed and deepened from a variety of perspectives:

Following a more Trinitarian approach, theologians like Amos Yong and Michael Ipgrave, and to a lesser extent S. Mark Heim, stress that just as there is a diversity of relationships within the very Godhead, so there is a diversity of relationships between the Divine and humans, and that means a diversity of relationships *among* the religions. Or more particularly, just as the Word cannot be what it is and realize its identity without a constitutive relationship with the Spirit, so too must Christians who are trying to understand this Word in Christ be in a constitutive relationship with what the Spirit is revealing in other communities. As stated earlier, the perichoresis of Word and Spirit is danced out historically in the dialogue of Christians and other believers.[35]

One of the most coherent and engaging efforts to work out a dialogical Christology is through the symbol of *kenosis*. David H. Jensen does this in his *In the Company of Others: A Dialogical Christology*. Unpacking the Pauline insistence that Jesus' divinity and his role as savior is tied, tightly but mysteriously, to the act of emptying and letting go of

[34] Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 221-22, 230.

[35] For Yong, Ipgrave, see Note 25. S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 2001).

himself in his love for and reaching out to others, Jensen arrives at an image of Jesus and discipleship that is essentially dialogical. In Jensen's own words:

> Jesus Christ is the *One who embodies openness to others*...He is the One who goes *ahead* of all who would enclose him, manifesting himself throughout time whenever openness to others is embodied in love.
>
> [Therefore:] 'Christomonism' – the proclamation of Jesus Christ at the expense of everything else – is a distortion of the life of discipleship and not its faithful execution. Indeed, conformity to Christ involves being claimed by others, and not claiming others as our own....In order to become more faithful disciples, Christians need the insights of persons who profess distinctly different religious commitments.[36]

Another formulation of a Christology that calls for dialogue with others is via the non-dual dynamic of particularity and universality. If we Christians rightly affirm the scandal of particularity, we must also remind ourselves that it is a paradoxical scandal. The particular is a sacrament of the universal. In his particularity, Jesus calls us beyond his own identity to open ourselves to the universal divine reality that beckons us through diversity. Douglas John Hall puts it this way: "...what is so fascinating about the 'necessary', if 'scandalous', *particular* named Jesus is that, being person, he puts us in touch with a *universal* God, who as living Person transcends our ideas and images of the divine *in the very act of coming close to us* ... Contrary to later (and usually heretical) Christologies, Jesus as he is depicted in the Gospels and epistles of the newer Testament, does not wish to be considered (as it were) all the God of God there is." And on the basis of such theological analysis, Hall makes a personal confession of faith that epitomizes a dialogical Christology: "I can say without any doubt at all that I am far more open to Jews and Muslims and Sikhs and humanists and all kinds of other

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[36] David H. Jensen, *In the Company of Others: A Dialogical Christology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), xi-xv, passim.

human beings, including self-declared atheists, *because* of Jesus than I should ever have been *apart* from him."[37]

3. A Prophetic Dialogue

If a dialogical Christology truly guides our explorations of the pluralistic terrain on the other side of the Vatican II bridge, it will also be a means of preserving what many – including our Pope – fear can so easily be lost: the uniqueness of Jesus the Christ. What I'm getting at has to do with the nature of dialogue. If Jesus is the Way that is open to other Ways, if that openness is truly dialogical, then the relationship with others is not just a matter of listening and learning; it also must include speaking and challenging. And this brings us to the question of what it is that we Christians can and must bring to the conversation; what is our distinctive, Christian contribution?

That's another version of the ever-recurring, never-finally-to-be-answered question: "Who do you say I am?" It must be formulated and answered according to the signs of the times. And with many Christians today, when I survey the signs of our times, I see incredible human and environmental suffering due to incredible human exploitation and injustice. In such a world, Christian witness must include what we know was distinctive of the identity and the message of Jesus: his particular (though certainly not exclusive) concern for the poor and the marginalized. Jesus did not just call for belief in God; he called for belief in the Reign of God – a new way of organizing society based on compassion, mutuality, and justice, especially for those who had been pushed aside. For Aloysius Pieris, today the most appropriate and effective way of speaking about Jesus' uniqueness is to show how He "is the covenant between YHWH and the non-persons of the world...the irrevocable covenant between

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[37] Douglas John Hall, *Why Christian? For Those on the Edge of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 33-34.

God and the poor."[38] Therefore: "Our specifically Christian mission is to share the Crucified God's solidarity or friendship with the poor, a friendship which led him to lay down his life for them. (Jn. 15:13)"[39]

A dialogical Christology, in other words, calls for a prophetic dialogue. This, I believe, is one of the most effective ways – in our present world – to preserve and proclaim the uniqueness of Christ. As followers of this Christ we announce that to know God, or to experience Enlightenment, or to submit to Truth may include many things, but it must also include not just loving our neighbor but doing justice and seeking reconciliation for the marginalized of the world. Other religious traditions may contain a similar concern; we will perhaps discover that in the dialogue. But what we *do* know is what we have seen in and learned from Jesus: that this concern for victims is integral to the experience of God or Truth. As Asian theologians and bishops are trying to make clear, it is by emphasizing or starting with this image of Jesus the prophet for the poor that we can best announce the Good News about our belief in Jesus as Savior or Son of God.[40]

Commitment and Openness

One of the greatest fears that Christians, both lay and clerical, have about any effort to move beyond the fulfillment perspective toward a recognition of the possible equal validity of other religions is that it will threaten or diminish one's commitment to Christ. Here I believe we can

[38] Aloysius Pieris, *Fire and Water : Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 150-51.

[39] Aloysius Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula* (Sri Lanka: Tulana Research Centre, 1998), Chapter 4.

[40] Aloysius Pieris, "Christ beyond Dogma: Doing Christology in the Context of the Religions and the Poor, " *Louvain Studies* 25 (2000) 187-231. Felix Wilfred, "Images of Jesus Christ in the Asian Pastoral Context: An Interpretation of the Documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, *Concilium_* (1993/2), 51-62.

make clear that just as commitment to Christ is thoroughly compatible with openness to others, so openness to others is thoroughly compatible with commitment to Christ. To open oneself to the surprises of what the Spirit may be doing in other religions need not threaten at all what we know God has done in Jesus. Or more generally, and more psychologically, we do not have to know, or even believe, that our way is God's only or best way in order to be fully committed to our way. There may be other aspects of Divine truth, or other ways in which God transforms human lives; and because they are from God, we can respect and learn from them. The recognition that there may be no "best way" need not threaten the love and devotion I have for my way.

In a truly mutual dialogue, religious people still feel, and feel deeply, that they have something they want to, and need to, share with others. Christians may feel that their partners already know God or Truth, but that doesn't exclude the belief that they can learn more of God and Truth through the dialogue. Philosophically: to question or deny that any religion has the *exclusive* or the *final* truth is not to question that religions can still have *universal* truth. Just because I do not believe that my religion is superior to yours doesn't mean that I don't still believe that my religion has something important to say to yours. Therefore, Christians on the other side of the bridge will continue to witness to Christ, and they will continue to feel that such witness can bring other religious people to a deeper, more engaging understanding of God's truth and vision for the world.

So, the Christian openness to other religions will always be a confessional openness. One of the most simple yet eloquent descriptions of what such a confessional openness implies was given by H. Richard Niebuhr way back in 1941. In relation to outsiders, he urged Christians to confess and state clearly what has been their experience of Jesus and the Church, what they believe – without trying to "justify it as superior to all other faiths." Niebuhr felt that such claims of superiority "become more destructive of religion, Christianity, and the soul than any foe's

attack can possibly be". So he counselled his fellow Christians to enter the conversation with others "by stating in simple, confessional form what has happened to us in our community, how we came to believe, how we reason about things, and what we see from our point of view."[41] And without any further talk of "only" or "superior", let the dialogue move forward.

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[41] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 39, 41.

Editorial

Human body occupies an ambiguous role in cultural categorizations. For an individual, the body is the most familiar visible 'thing' perceived, and yet it tends to disappear in the very act of perception of the outside world. The body stands simultaneously as the Self and the Other. It is both a subject and an object of knowledge. It is both a tool and a raw material to be worked upon. It undergoes simultaneous presence and absence, especially in intense feelings and sensations. It is the subject of awareness and yet it always risks disappearing from our awareness. This binary character of the body distills down to philosophy and theology also. This issue of *Jeevadhara* seeks to explore integrated approaches to the body in theological discourse.

The body has a strong analogical meaning in theology. For instance, the church is conceived as the body of Christ. One can extend this metaphor to God and speak of God's body. Contemporary theology speaks even of the body parts of God. One does not have to agree with all the conclusions of such theological imaginations. But to have a birds-eye-view of such ideas would surely enhance our theological sensibilities. This purpose is served by the work of Mathew Illathuparampil in this issue.

Theology is duly concerned about human body, because it reveals the mystery of a person. When Adam named the animals, he realized that he was "alone" as a body-person in the world. This experience of human "solitude," of being alone before God, makes him different from the rest of creation. His solitude is overcome by communion with his soul-mate Eve and with God. In that process body was a strong medium. The article of Arby Gregory analyses communion through human body.

There are many reasons for theology to get interested in body. Human body is one of the constituent elements theological dogmas, right

from the incarnation to ascension of the body. Similarly, body is a prime spiritual medium. Pope John Paul II observes, "God comes to us in the things we know best and can verify most easily, the things of our everyday life, apart from which we cannot understand ourselves" (*Faith and Reason,* n. 12). Our embodiment is more immediate to us than any other medium to experience God. God meets us in the flesh. This explains a discussion on the relation between embodiment and spirituality, worked out in the article of Savioamma Thattamparampil.

Our society tends to objectify human body. It is turned as an object of pleasure, entertainment, experiment, commerce, etc. It raises the fundamental question whether the individual is the owner of the body. A socialist mind might even propose the society as the owner of the body. It warrants a discussion on issues related to the ownership of the body. It is served by Scaria Kanniyakonil in his article.

Analogical applications of body allow theologians even to speak of the world as God's body. Apparently it puts God "at risk". For, God becomes dependent on the world, at least by implications. Such a God will also be liable to bodily contingencies. However, recognizing God's presence in nature may bring in some welcome conclusions. It is this context that justifies the work of Prem Xalxo.

On the whole, "Body in Theological Discourse" suggests that the body is not a minor theme in theology. A sober theological grasp of the body may help us speak more cogently about beauty, sexuality, embodiment, communion, resurrection etc. A worthy task to be pursued!

Mathew Illathuparampil

Body in Theology

Mathew Illathuparampil

Body is an all-pervasive theme in Christian theology: from human body to the Church as the body of Christ. Nonetheless, there is a sad generalization that theological tradition neglected body while busying itself with the concerns of soul. This essay attempts to show some strands of contemporary theology which approach body with due seriousness, basing themselves on the Scriptures. It outlines how the body of God, with special reference to God's mouth and phallus, the body of Jesus Christ and human body are subjected to theological musings. It explains the contours of theological metaphors built up from body. Author of this essay, Dr. Mathew Illathuparampil, is professor of moral theology at Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Alwaye, Kerala.

Introduction

In theological discourse and popular imagination there is a skewed generalization about Christian approach to body. It holds that Christianity has always subordinated body to the soul or Christianity has preached hatred of the body. It is possible to collect a good number of 'proofs' to support these claims from the past. However, it will make only a partial truth. Detailed and indepth examination of the Christian traditions will prove that Christian theology has a complex and also shifting relationship with the body right from its initial stages.

In the Bible, God's Torah is written both on stone (Ex. 24: 12) and flesh, in the hearts of the people (Jer. 31: 33; 2Cor. 3: 2–3), and in the Gospels it arrives in a body, in the life of Jesus (Luke 4: 16–21). As Averil Cameron notes, all "the central elements in orthodox Christianity – the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the Eucharist – focus on the body as symbolic of higher truth."[1] Indeed, for

all these elements, the body is not just a symbol of their truth, but the site where it is realized. Briefly, there is little scope for a sweeping genera- lization of the neglect of body in theology. What we can say for sure seems that from its earliest days the Church exhibited an ambivalent attitude to the body. It is captured succinctly by the seventh-century eastern theologian John Climacus, 'He [body] is my helper and my enemy, my assistant and my opponent, a protector and a traitor.'[2]

Contemporary theology makes serious and sincere engagements with the body. This essay is an attempt to point out how well body figures in recent theology. In this survey we overlook two, oft-treated strands of theology of body, namely, one propounded by John Paul II and his followers; and the other feminist theological approach to body following the lead of Luce Irigaray and others. As Tina Beattie shows both understand the body as a site of divine revelation and that women's liberation lies not in minimizing the differences but discovering them as gift.[3] Our interest in this account is to show how contemporary authors mine theological meaning from (the symbol of) body interpreting both Jewish and Christian scriptures. Due to the constraints of space, our approach shall be suggestive, rather than exhaustive and detailed. We focus on three bodies: the body of God, the body of Jesus and human body.

Body of God

If we follow strictly the Thomistic line, God has no body. Bodily metaphors for God found in the Bible (Ps. 33:16; Job 40: 4; Ps 117: 16) serve as symbols of God's power (*Summa Theologiae* 1a.3.1 *ad* 1; 1a.1.9). "Parts of the body are ascribed to God in the scriptures by a metaphor drawn from their functions. Eyes, for example, see, and so, we

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1 Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991) 68.

2 Quoted in K. Ware, "My Helper and my Enemy: The Body in Greek Christianity," in S. Coakley, ed., *Religion and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 90.

3 Tina Beattie, "Carnal Love and Spiritual Imagination: Can Luce Irigaray and John Paul II Come Together," in Jon Davies and Gerard Loughlin (eds.), *Sex These Days: Essays on Theology, Sexuality and Society* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 160-83.

call God's power of sight his eye, though it is not a sense-power, but intellect. And so with other parts of the body" (*Summa Theologiae* 1a.3.1 *ad* 3). Most people will admit that if we are to understand God we must begin shedding the physical images by which God has been described. However, popular piety still entertains the image of God having a body, perhaps drawn, for example, from the image of God as an old man with a white-beard. It looks that this figure originates from the Book of Daniel. "His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool" (Daniel 7: 9). In the Western tradition William Blake's 1794 picture of the "Ancient of Days" popularized this image of God.

There are strands of contemporary theology which like to pursue theological reasoning in the wake of biblical allusions to God's body. We shall briefly expose some of such theological reasoning on God's body based on biblical references.

The Hebrew Scriptures suggest that God has some bodily form and that it at least resembled that of a human being (Exod. 24: 9-11; 33: 17, 23; 1 Kgs 22: 19; Amos 9: 1; Isa. 6: 10; Ezek.1: 26-28; Dan. 7: 9). But what is remarkable about this imaging of God's body is that it is always at least partly disguised. The reason for this may be to conceal God's sex, thus avoiding questions of how both sexes can image God. The Hebrew Scriptures predominantly suggest masculine image of God. This could be the reason why Israel is often represented as the female lover or wife of God (Hos. 1-3; Ezek. 16: 23). But this image became problematic when the priests understood Israel primarily as a gathering of males. For, the body of a God who is male thus potentially evokes homoeroticism.'[4] In theological discussions on God's body we focus on the mouth of God and phallus of God.

Mouth of God

In the Bible God demonstrates his body through his voice. "The Lord your God says" is a common expression. It is true that we can imagine God speaking with a *disembodied* voice. Still, the dis*embodied* voice would signify a bodily origin, whether in its crystallized form in a biblical text or when it is preached or read in a prayer gathering.

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4 Lisa Isherwood & Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 55-56.

The mouth of God is a rich theological metaphor. The mouthless God gains an ultimate mouth in the historical person of Jesus, who speaks as God. Speech of God taking place in Jesus cannot be reduced to his talks during his public ministry. More fundamentally, as the Logos of God, Jesus speaks the world and the world comes to be. "... the Word was God.... All things were made through him" (Jn. 1: 2-3).

Any mouth can be put for many ends. They are not just for speaking, but also for eating, blowing, sucking, and, of course kissing.[5] The bible has a variety of kisses. David and Jonathan "kissed each other, and wept with each other" (1 Samuel 20: 41). Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth kissed and "wept aloud" together (Ruth 1: 9). Judas betrays his "friend" with a kiss (Matthew 26: 49– 50). The early Christians were enjoined to greet one another with a "holy kiss" (Rom. 16: 16; 1Cor. 16: 20; 2Cor. 13: 12; 1Thes. 5: 26; 1Peter 5: 14). Perhaps the most significant one is the kiss spread at the beginning of the Song of Songs: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (1: 2). For, this biblical kiss would become an enduring symbol for the soul's union with God in the Christian mystical tradition which was equally a theological tradition. This tradition is very remarkable in the sense that it used the body to explore the soul's embrace in the arms of a bodiless God.[6]

It is Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), who in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs,* brings out the multiple layers of theological meaning for the kiss. It suggests the intimacy between the bride and her bridegroom, the soul and Christ, the church and her Savior, and between Christ and the Father. "A fertile kiss therefore, a marvel of stupendous self-abasement that is not a mere pressing of mouth upon mouth; it is the uniting of God with man."[7] The bodily images become much more vivid: the Word in Jesus kisses the ascending soul. She in her turn starts her ascent with first kissing Christ's feet. "Prostrate yourself on the ground,

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5 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," in Gerard Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 119.

6 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 120.

7 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* I, (2.3). translated by Kilian Walsh OCSO, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971) 10., as used in Gerard Loughlin, Omphalos," 121.

take hold of his feet, soothe them with kisses, sprinkle them with your tears and so wash not them but yourself. Thus you will become one of the 'flock of shorn ewes as they come up from the washing' [Song of Songs 4:2]."[8]

St. Bernard extends the imagery of the kiss further: the soul ascends to Christ by moving up his body, covering it with kisses; a ladder of arousal that rises to a returned kiss on the mouth. "And it is because the bride asks to receive *the kisses* of his mouth, rather than to be kissed on her mouth or by his mouth, that Bernard is led to find the kiss at the heart of God. Bernard distinguishes between mouth and kiss because the lips that kiss and are kissed become for him the lips of the Father and the Son, with the Spirit the kiss itself that flows between the lips of the divine lovers."[9] The soul participates in the erotic life of the Trinity. She receives the kiss which is the Spirit, and which Christ gave to the church when he breathed upon the disciples (John 20: 22).

Augustine, in his book on *The Trinity*, famously likened the divine Trinity to the relationship of lovers. Carnal love is the "coupling or trying to couple" of two things, namely, the "lover and that is being loved." And if we raise this image to a spiritual plane, to love of the spirit in the friend, rather than of the friend's body, we will arrive at a more fitting triad for modeling the divine relationships: "the lover, what is being loved, and love."[10]

Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–88) further developed Trinitarian theology using bodily or sexual metaphors.[11] Interpreting the *Song of Songs*' "well of living water" (4.15) Balthasar imagines the divine life as an ejaculatory flow: "a flowing wellspring with no holdingthrough beneath it, an act of procreation with no seminal vesicle,

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8   Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* I, (3.2)., as used in Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 121.

9   Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* I, (4.1)., as used in Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 121.

10 St. Augustine, *The Trinity*, 8.5.14.

11 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed*, introduced by Medard Kehl SJ and translated by David Kipp (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990) 32., as used in Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 122.

with no organism at all to perform the act."[12] Balthasar uses the same biblical image to describe the bridegroom's return to life on the first Easter morning. As Gerard Loughlin writes, now "the fountain's mouth is a wound, from which the seminal flow gushes forth."[13]

Phallus of God

As we have already suggested, the Bible does not expose God's body in *totum*. It offers us only a number of fragmentary images of God's body. Thus the bible conceals God's body as much as reveals it. Deuteronomy (4: 12–24) told the Israelites that they cannot picture God because God is formless. Moses (Exodus 33: 20–23) wanted to "know" God (*da'ath'elohim*) a subtle suggestion that to know God is to sleep with him.[14] But Moses is told that he cannot see God's face and live. Therefore when God passes before Moses, he covers Moses with his hand, so that Moses sees only God's departing back. However, we also find other instances where Moses sees God and then live. He spoke to God, "face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Ex. 33: 11). Similarly Moses, and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders, sat down and ate a covenant meal in God's presence. They all saw God and lived (Exo. 24: 9–11). But did they see God fully? Presumably they saw only a part of God. "Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. . . . [T]hey beheld God, and they ate and drank" (24: 10). It may suggest that God's body can be seen only in parts, as in other visions of the deity (Amos 9: 1; Job 42: 5; 1Kings 22: 19; Is. 6: 1–2; Ez. 1: 26–8).

It is argued that the reason why Moses is allowed to see only God's back is to prevent him from seeing God's sex: the divine phallus. A substantiating incident is found in Ezekiel, who does not hesitate to tell us about the Egyptians "whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose emission was like that of stallions" (Ezekiel 23: 20), is simply shy when it comes to his vision of God. He tells us what every part of this body looked like, except for its loins. "Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like

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12 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed*, 30.
13 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 122.
14 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 123.

fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was splendor all around. Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezek. 1: 27–8).[15]

Gerard Loughlin points out that Israel hesitates over God's sex. For, it did not want to see God's genitals who does not reproduce himself. God has no consort, and so no use for the genitals. Ancient Israel imagined herself as God's consort. It entered into a marriage contract with Him. God has watched over Israel from infancy, when no one else would have her. And when she is old enough, he "takes" her for his own (Ezek. 16: 4–9). Male circumcision becomes the mark, in her flesh, on each man, of God's possession. But this girl is Israel – the *men* of Israel. The men of Israel must either acknowledge that they are like men who sleep with men as if with a woman, or imagine that they are women. It is then this dilemma that is partly overcome by hiding God's phallus.[16]

Body of Jesus

The body of Jesus Christ is a rich theological site in Christianity. The body of Jesus is subjected to theological imagination in numerous artworks and paintings. One may see Jesus' body beautifully featured and at the same time marred by wounds and pain. The body of Jesus is significant as it symbolizes the earthly life of a saviour, and thus of the saving God mediated through that body. So David Brown argues that even in the most agonized crucifixions there would be some countervailing sign, for example, a divine expression of calmness. Even in the most wretched form, Jesus' body must reflect something divine.[17]

In the Western tradition of Christian art, infant Jesus' genitalia are constantly exposed. Leo Steinberg argues that it is to establish his full humanity. The child Jesus is really human and really male. It cannot be missed that the same art tradition also chose to show, while concealing, the genitalia of the adult Jesus. Certain pictures of Christ crucified or

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15 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 125.

16 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 125.

17 David Brown, *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007) 28.

entombed display his erect member through the elaborate folds of the cloth by which it is covered. Steinberg suggests that this sixteenth-century attempt was to show Christ's perfect humanity. For, Christ, unlike fallen man, could excite himself by will alone, even in death. "[T] he necessarily voluntary erection ... triumphs over both death and sin. It is the painter's way of writing Paradise Regained on the body of Christ." [18]

Two Bodily Encounters with Jesus

Graham Ward examines two post-resurrection accounts of encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel. One, between Jesus and Mary of Magdala and the other between Jesus and apostle Thomas.

Jesus' encounter with Mary in the "Garden" (John 19.41): Mary stood at the tomb outside, weeping. As she wept, she peered into the tomb; she did not find Jesus' body. She said to the angels, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid him." With these words she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but did not recognise him. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking it was the gardener, she said, "If it is you, Sir, who have removed him, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said, "Mary!" She turned to him and said, "Rabboni!" Jesus said, "Touch me no more [*Me mouaptou*], for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers, and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God." Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with the news, "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20: 11-18).

The second account: One of the Twelve, Thomas, was not with the rest when Jesus came. So the disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." He said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails on his hands, unless I put my finger into the place where the nails were, and my hand into his side, I will not believe". When Jesus appears again he said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here: see my hands. Reach your hand here and put it into my side. Be unbelieving no longer, but believe." Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20: 24–8).

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18 Leo Steinberg Leo, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, II ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 324–325., as cited in Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 126.

In both encounters there are strong bodily actions and gestures. Mary's turning and attempting to embrace him; Thomas's reaching beyond the boundaries of his own body to penetrate and thrust himself into the body of Christ. Graham Ward says, in both accounts there is semblance of eroticism. The disciple/master relation of Mary and Jesus is conflated with the relation between a man and a woman that is mythologized as a return to the Garden of Eden. Thomas touches the raw flesh of Jesus, placing his hand into the very wound that in John is symbolic of the vaginal opening through which the community of Christ's body is born.[19]

In both accounts bodily actions are evident. Mary stands, stoops to peer, turns, turns again at the mention of her name, moves forward to embrace, moves back from the embrace and withdraws to tell the disciples what she has seen. In the second narrative, Jesus stands in the midst, confronting Thomas, then offers his body for examination. Thomas moves forward, extends his finger, stretches out his hand, pushes it into the side of Christ and withdraws. These actions of bodies in both passages focus on Jesus' body, coming to an identification of who he is through engaging with this body. The knowledge that evolves in this identification process is both bodily and theological.

In these encounters, we find the play of absence and presence. When Mary presents herself before the tomb, Jesus is absent there because the tomb is empty. Still, he is there in Mary herself, loved within her, internalized as the Lord and Master. Jesus' presence is part of Mary's presence. The physical absence of Jesus' presence that remains within her, replaces a sense of himself. It evokes her desire for Jesus. That desire is expressed through her response to the 'gardener'. She wants to have the presence of Jesus even if only as a corpse. What she missed was the body of Jesus while she possessed the presence of Jesus in her. But when Jesus appeared in (resurrected) body she mistook him as the gardener. Turning about she turns into her own name being called. While hearing her name called, she turns to herself and to Jesus; she identifies his 'bodily' voice with the Jesus residing in her.[20]

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19 Graham Ward, "There is no Sexual Difference," in Gerard Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology*, 78.

20 Graham Ward, "There is no Sexual Difference," in Gerard Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology*, 79-80.

The command do not touch me (my body) can be seen in the context of bodily presence-absence sequence. When Jesus called her name, he called her to herself who is part of himself. But when he asks her not to touch him he speaks *to* her and so demonstrates that they are not one. "His speaking to her is a communication *with* her, but also a separation *from* her."[21] It is in the background of the dialectical relation of absence and presence that she makes the testimony that "I have seen the Lord."

Bodily encounter between Jesus and Thomas is more intuitive. Here also the theme of absence and presence play their role. When Jesus appeared, Thomas was absent. Later when Thomas was present in the company of other apostles, Jesus was absent. Despite Jesus's bodily absence, Jesus was not absent in Thomas. His words to his companions prove it. Jesus' death and earthly life lived in Thomas. Jesus appears to Thomas in the bodily form as Thomas wanted.

For Thomas, seeing the resurrected Jesus would not have been enough. Jesus appears in a 'wounded body.' When he appeared to Mary and to other disciples elsewhere, there is no mention of wounds in Jesus' body. These wounds have deeply cut within Thomas an understanding of the crucified savior. Through his bodily encounter that understanding must now undergo a radical change. Jesus invites Thomas to touch his body. Mary in her case was about to touch Jesus spontaneously. Thomas must now go to the depths of Jesus where no other person has been allowed to go, namely, into the flesh of Jesus Christ. He must get a new knowledge and identification through bodily engagement. Flesh must touch flesh. His belief in the resurrection of Jesus must base itself on the carnal reception of and response to flesh touching flesh. This is not just an attempt to identify Jesus through touch. The resurrected one wants a crossing of bodily boundaries. Thomas has to perform his desire for Jesus. Mary too had the same desire, to be one with Jesus. Seeing alone is not enough. Thomas has to be commanded. He has to submit to that command. Thomas has to be brought to the knowledge of Jesus. But Mary gains that knowledge in utter surrender of herself at the call of

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21 Graham Ward, "There is no Sexual Difference," in Gerard Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology*, 80.

her name. Thomas is led to an intimate, carnal, and which is at the same time, a spiritual knowledge.[22]

Human Body

Reflections on the body of God and Jesus will naturally extend themselves to a theological discourse on human body. Naturally it must begin from the Genesis insight that 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Gen. 1: 27). To represent God in any form was strictly forbidden in Jewish tradition (Ex. 20: 4). No image of God was ever allowed. The strict Jewish abhorrence of directly representing the divine extended even to the human figure.[23] In the same vein, nothing was allowed to enhance bodily presence or any sense of its dignity. For it might look like an attempt to portray divinity. This has been the commonly held view. But, if we turn to the story of the creation of humanity in Genesis and the subsequent history of its exegesis, a rather different picture begins to emerge.[24] We capture some reflections of that tradition below.

God makes humankind (*adam*) in God's own image, after God's own likeness: humankind in two kinds, "male and female he created them" (Genesis 1.26–7). It is held that Adam was made 'perfect in physical beauty' because so was God, as inferred from Ezekiel: 28: 12. God passed on the splendor of his own corporeal identity to Adam.[25] This seems to be one of the reasons to use physical imagery for God, supported by scriptural texts such as Gen. 3: 8; Exod. 33: 23; Isa. 6: 1; Ezek. 1: 26; Amos 4: 13; 9: 1. The bodies of Adam and Eve are prototypical in the Bible. They prefigure all other bodies. They become the reference point for all bodily things which are to follow. Perhaps, the only other biblical

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22 Graham Ward, "There is no Sexual Difference," in Gerard Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology*, 81.

23 For increasing recognition of the presence within Judaism of alternatives to the psychosomatic account, see G.W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); J. Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

24 David Brown, *God and Grace of Body*, 20.

25 One author who accepts that the image of God in human beings includes body is G. von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM Press, 1972) 58–59.

body that is more significant is Christ's. It encompasses the body of the first parents also.

Eve made from Adam's body or bone has suggested her secondary status or dependency. Debates are not fully settled on the question whether the difference between the sexes is one of degree or of kind. Middle ages were driven by "one-sex" biology, in which male and female were but permutations of a single sex. Accordingly, there was no ontological difference between Adam and Eve. The risk (and possibility) was that a woman could become a man; and a man might fear to become a woman.[26] It means, at the level of the libido there are no two sexes. Psychologists like Sigmund Freud held that from a strictly analytical point of view, there was in fact only one sex, or sexuality. It is a theological question as much as a psychological one. For example, what does it mean for women what *Gaudium et Spes* # 41 says with scriptural support that whoever follows Christ, the perfect man, himself becomes more of a man. (*Quicumque Christum sequitur, Hominem perfectum, et ipse magis homo fit)*. Does this becoming a perfect man would include mothering and women's embodiment?[27]

The story of woman created from the body of man could very well suggest a story of complementarity. Eve is a different creature that complements Adam's singularity. For, Eve is distinct while she is ontologically the same as Adam. It is proclaimed by Adam: "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2: 23). But this complementing companionship is thwarted by Fall or sin leading to the institution(s) of hierarchy between man and woman. The order of hierarchy soon develops into the order of patriarchy.

Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden for eating forbidden fruit. They were punished. Their fall was a "fall" into patriarchal order. The

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26 This idea is reflected in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. It concludes with these words: 114 Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life." [2]Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. [3]For every female who makes herself male will enter the domain of Heaven."

27 Kari Vogt, "'Becoming Male": one aspect of early Christian anthropology' in eds., Janet Soskice and Diana Lipton, *Feminism and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 49-62.

woman will bring forth children in pain, and yet still desire to have more of them with her husband, who will rule over her; while he will toil to gain food from the earth, out of the dust from which he was made and to which he will return (Genesis 3: 16–19). Contemporary wisdom recognizes that this subordination of the woman to the man is a disorder. But St. Augustine, appropriate to a fourth century man, did not find issues of subordination of women to men. He interpreted it in an allegorical sense. He taught that learning good habits is painful and requires subordinating the flesh to reason, as if to its "husband." Since women, according to Augustine, are more bodily than men, and men more rational than women, it is simply natural that they be subordinate to men.[28]

The order of hierarchy first established with punishment was extended next to questions of salvation. For instance, Tertullian claimed that women must first become men if they were to be saved; that in being saved they will become the "self-same sex as men," for man alone was made in the image of God.[29] Palladius thought that in learning virtue (*virtus*), woman becomes man (*vir*); she becomes a "female man of God."[30] But Augustine has a strong and different testimony in the *City of God* that "the sex of a woman is not a vice, but nature," and that God, "who instituted two sexes will restore them both" in the resurrection. When Christ denied that there would be marrying or giving in marriage in the resurrected life, he implied the presence of both men *and* women in heaven.[31]

Purity of Body

One of the concerns of body in all its expressions in the bible is purity. The book of Leviticus appears very much bodily in the whole

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28 Augustine , *On Genesis*, trans., by Edmund Hill and Matthew O'Connell, *The Works of St Augustine* (New York:New City Press, 2002) 91.

29 Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women*, I.i–ii, trans., S. Thelwall, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed., A. Roberts, J. Donaldson and A.C. Coxe (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), IV: 14–15.

30 Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450* (London: Routledge, 1995) 214., as cited in Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 119.

31 St. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, XXII.17.

biblical corpus. (*Song of Songs* is another book which celebrates body in the Jewish scriptures). It may look somewhat strange that a book attributed to the priestly tradition is preoccupied with body and particularly with what goes in and comes out of it. The body is shown prone to impurity from various foods (Lev. 11), its own discharges and emissions (Lev. 12 and 15), from lack of variously caused bodily integrity (Lev. 19: 27; 21: 2, 16-23).

The book of Leviticus is seriously concerned with ritual purity of ancient Israel's priestly class. Its priests have to be perfect, with stainless bodies, free of the flows that confound the boundaries between one thing and another: between male and female, us and them. Concern with the purity of body underlies a deeper quest for the purity of the body politic of Israel. In Leviticus, polity and purity are intimately related because the security of the social body was maintained through the due purity of the priestly body. "The Israelites were always in their history a hard-pressed minority. . . . The threatened boundaries of their body politics would be well mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body."[32] The blurring of boundaries, between species or between genders, through bodily activity was also regarded as being an unclean act (Lev. 18; 20: 10-21). Israel was called by God to be a holy nation and this essentially involved being separated from other nations (Lev. 24b-26) with significant boundaries being strongly protected.[33] Thus the priestly concern with bodily purity became a symbol of the body's vulnerability. The ejaculations and discharges of its fluids could cross the borders of skin and country. Human flesh can always make cross-country travels: its fluids may go out, its skin may touch other skins, its limbs may contact foreign limbs, both human and divine.[34] Therefore, the injunctions of the book of Leviticus have profound religious and political bearings, other than its sexual and ritual demands.

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32 M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2002) 153.

33 Lisa Isherwood & Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 53.

34 Gerard Loughlin, "Omphalos," 116.

Conclusion

We have been trying in this essay to drive home the idea that theology continues to occupy body as a theme of vital interest. However, there are many more body-related themes which merit theological attention such as embodiment, dualism that separates body from the spirit, Christ's embodiment, communion of bodies, sexuality, the experience of embodiment and our longing for union in the eschaton, etc. Constraints of space did not allow us to deal with them.

Any language, including theological language cannot but use bodily metaphors frequently such as "rule of thumb", "the heart of the matter", "face value", and "one foot in the grave". In a world that is often preoccupied and at times obsessed with body, it is simply natural that bodily metaphors occupy theological language. As this essay tried to show communication of God depends on one or other bodily images. The greatest self-communication of God - the Incarnation - was in perfect bodily form, through the historical person of Jesus Christ.

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Communion through the Body

Arby Gregory

Defeating the simple instrumentalist presumptions of the body, this essay argues that the body is an inevitable medium for communion among human beings and also with God. Basing himself mostly on the insights of Pope John Paul II, the author outlines the theological logic of communion which is expressed in many ways. Human beings are able to realize the mystery of love and communion as personal experience through their own body. The starting point of love and communion is bodily existence itself. This essay explains the nuptial image of the body and celibate life as vehicles of communion, of course, in two different ways. The author, Dr. Arby Gregory, is professor of systematic theology at St. Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Carmelgiri.

Introduction

Language is generally understood as a system of communicating with other people using sounds, symbols and words in expressing meaning, idea or thought. In this sense, all the religions of the world have got their own language and so we can say that the language of Judaism is Hebrew, the language of Hinduism is Sanskrit and the language of Islam is Arabic. But when we try to explore the language of Christianity, it is not easy to identify a particular language like this. The reality of Christianity goes deeper than any other conventional languages.

The mystery of Christianity unveils through the incarnation of Christ and it is centered upon the fact that God became flesh which means God has taken the form of body. Therefore, the language of Christianity is that of the body. Moreover, all the process of understanding and exploration of God in Christianity begin with creation of different bodies like mineral, vegetative, animal and human. Hence the body which is

manifested through creation is a sign of Divine mystery. God the eternal mystery of love is becoming sensible to us through the manifested body of Christ without which there is no possibility of encountering a tangible experience of God.

Biblical Understanding of the Body

Old Testament had a very holistic understanding of the body in contrast to the Hellenistic system. In Judaism there is no word as such for body and in the place of two words like *soma* and *sarx* in Greek; Jews had only one word i.e. *basar*.[1] In Hebrew mind there was no contrast between matter and the substance out of which the matter was made. For the Jews there was no need of a second term because *basar* stands for the whole life substance of men or beast as originated in corporeal form. For the Jews, there were eighty parts in a normal human body, but there is no single word to express the idea of the whole body because when one part of the body is being mentioned, it meant to represent the whole. Soul and body distinction is very much foreign to the Hebrew thought. For them body is not something one has but body is something which man is. "The Hebrew idea of the personality is an animated body and not an incarnated soul."[2]

The Hebrews in contrast to the Greeks never treated body for its own sake. The Hebrews were not interested in the body as such, "all questions of the interrelation of its different parts were entirely subordinated to the question of the relation of the whole man, as part of the solidarity of creation, to God."[3] The Hebrews viewed man in the context of God's total handiwork and man was not placed in a pedestal setting apart from the rest of creation. The Hebrew thinking was more or less centered upon man's interrelatedness to God seen in a more vertical dimension from creature to Creator.[4] The body is also the soul and the soul is also the body and there is no body that was not from the point of view of their differences but they stressed different aspects of

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1   John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Norwich: Fletcher and Son, 1977) 11.

2   John A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, 14.

3   John A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, 15.

4   John A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, 16.

the whole man in relation to God. It is significant that all their expressions were adapted to show the unity of the personality under the various aspects of its fundamental relation to God which was based upon the deep understanding of the theological truth of man's nature.

St. Paul in the New Testament uses the word *sarx* and *soma*. When he uses sarx which is translated as flesh-substance, he meant the whole person, considered from the point of view of his external and physical existence. He also uses sarx to denote the incarnated Christ (Eph 2:15, Col 1:22) and for a personal bodily presence (Col 2, 5). *Sarx* is pictured as something visible and external as opposed to what is internal and spiritual. But it does not mean part of a whole but the whole man seen under the aspect of the flesh. St. Paul, as in the Old Testament frequently uses *sarx* simply to denote man. To act according to the flesh is for St. Paul to do simply in the fallible power of human strength and resolution (2Cor 1; 17). *Sarx* for St. Paul also means man in his worldliness, in the solidarity of earthly existence. Like *basar* in Old Testament *sarx* stands especially for the solidarities of the sex (1Cor 6; 16) and of race (Rom 9:3). *Soma* like sarx does not mean simply something external to man, rather something constitutional. That is to say what one is. *Soma* is the nearest equivalent to our word personality. *Soma* is the whole person, hence St. Paul would speak of body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:9) and again St. Paul is asking us to glorify God in our bodies (1Cor 6:9).

The body for St. Paul, like flesh for Hebrews, is what ties men up with each other, rather than what separates them as individuals. "The body is that which joins all people, irrespective of individual differences, in life's bundle together."[5] St. Paul never stresses any kind of individuation. He sometimes employs a collective singular where we should expect a plural, "waiting for our redemption, to wait the redemption of our body (Rom 8;23), or when he speaks of Jesus Christ fashioning anew the body of our humiliation (Phil 3:21). The reference here is to the whole mass of fallen human nature in which we share as an individual human being. How the redemption and resurrection is made possible in the body is the central theme of St. Paul's doctrine of the person and work of

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5 John A. T. Robinson, *The Body*, 29.

Christ. For all his being as flesh, man is created to live in a unique relationship to his Creator and to his fellow human beings in communion. One of the most oft repeated generalizations echoed in St. Paul from ancient Judaism is an entirely positive attitude to the body. Therefore we can say that the body is something real and it is to be understood in a more holistic sense without giving any chance of dismemberment.

Beauty of the Body in Relationship

The beauty of the body in the Old Testament consists in its expression of concrete communion together with its holistic dimensions. Jews could never think of an abstract concept like power or strength without mentioning it in a more concrete and real expression. Therefore the power is exercised by a strong hand and strength of the foot consisted in standing on the neck of the enemy which is the gesture of subjugation.[6] It is unimaginable to choose something as beautiful looking from the external appearance of the body form. Their point of reference was primarily on their activity rather than the external form. The dynamic activity of the organs in a body is counted not in the external appearance. They do not compose songs concentrating on the external elements of the body. The beauty is seen in the dynamic expression of the person itself, like eyes are beautiful because they send message of love and life, in the floating nature and strength the beauty of the hair is seen, the throat is beautiful because of its proud bearing, and the beauty of woman's breast consisted in their refreshing movements. More than the individual part or person as such, it is the activity of that part or relationship between two or more people that what makes a thing beautiful. "The ideal of beauty is not physical, but an ideal of relationship."[7] If we put it in the framework of Jesus' saying the beauty consists in the communion of the persons, "where two or three gather in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18: 20).

The perfect form of human relationships allows God to be at work. Presence of God is seen and His revelation will be manifested where every individual is honored and where each one would be able to see the

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6 Schorer Silvia and Staubli Thomas, *Body Symbolism in the Bible* (Minnesota: Collegevilla Press, 1962)19.

7 Schorer Silvia and Staubli Thomas, *Body Symbolism in the Bible*, 26.

image of God in their own neighbor. Each and every individual through his or her bodily presence make a conducive atmosphere for peace and respect which causes a real communion of beauty. "The sages of Israel employ their own model of the body to make concrete the conditions for such a community."[8] This can be very well seen in proverb 6:16-19 in the pattern of numerical saying: "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him; haughty eyes, lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies, and who sows discord in a family" (Proverbs 6:16-19). An advantageous and solidarity community comes to be where there is no misuse of the body. Communion in such a community is a divine blessing and therefore it is beautiful. Because of the perfect condition of the body, it is compared to the anointed body of the high priest and Mount Hermon which is blessed with dew as described in Psalm 133.

If a beautiful person is the one who is able to relate well with others, an isolated person who is incapable of relationship is pictured a horror. Such a person is compared to the image of an idol, who has body but not capable of using it. An example is seen in Psalm 115:4-6, "their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands; they have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear noses but do not smell. They have hands but do not fee; feet, do not walk, they make no sound in their throats." Uselessness of the idols evolves from their character of inability of relationship. Those who are misusing the body by committing evils which God denounces are isolated beings. They are not only useless but unpleasing before the eyes of God.

The beauty of their prayer focused upon their own concrete corporeality. By assessing the pitiable condition of their own living bodies, they placed their ailing body before Yahweh. By enumerating their sufferings and difficulties, they brought their bodily infirmities and limitations before the lord. In those prayers they brought their longing for integral whole humanity before Yahweh. Thus in a great many psalms we find an astonishing accumulation of bodily organs and parts. Thus the pitiable condition of the body is seen in Psalm 22, which Jesus prays on

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8. Schorer Silvia and Staubli Thomas, *Body Symbolism in the Bible*, 29.

the cross, shows how desperate the one crying out this lament is: "I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breath, my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws" (Psalm 22;14-15).

Body as the Medium of Perceptions

Since the body is the medium of perceptions, communion and relationship are made possible. As it is the organ of perception and is necessarily involved in all perceptions. The body is the midpoint and locus of communication between God and man. God does not speak in a hypothetical spirit, or abstract mind, or demons, or angels, or priests, or saints, or sages, or words on a page, but He speaks in the flesh of our flesh and in the bone of our bones. This is Body Theology. Hence the word of the congregation of faith, "in the body and through the body one touches the person himself in his concrete reality"[9] becomes relevant. Bodies centre us in the universe, making it possible for others to find us not merely as objects or instruments but as living unique personal presence.

Body as a means of Revelation

It is through our bodies that we express our living unique personal presence a reality. Therefore the embodiment testifies to a hidden and strong presence of the person. It is in and through the body that man is always present and come across before others. The human embodiment is distinct presence which removes all sorts of confusion of the individual identity. Through the body, one expresses one's subjective inwardness and objective outwardness of the person. There is a ground for both intimacy and distance, to be near and to be away. Pope John Paul II considers body in a far superior way than many others. According to him, the determining fact of a person as subject is through his body and not simply through the self-awareness and self-determination of the person.[10]

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9 Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith: "Instruction on the respect of human life and in origin and its dignity," p, 8.

10 Isherwood Lisa and Stuart Elizabeth, *Introducing Body Theology* (Wiltshire: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 73.

Body is revelatory that it is the real symbol of the whole person. Our bodies are the visible expression of the living person. Each person is expressed bodily from the moment of conception and because of that we can say that a human person does not possess a body. Within the totality of the individuality, the living body manifests the whole person. The human body in itself and in its totality reveals the mystery of a person which is not the same in animals. This body-person because of its unique embodied nature is the basic reason why, one experiences loneliness. Pope John Paul II describes this as the experience of "original solitude." This is being realized all the more powerfully by Adam when he named the animals. We all know this experience of human "solitude" – of being alone before God, different from the rest of creation.

From the beginning it is clear that human person is created in such a way that one may be able to participate in the mystery of creation in and through their bodylines and thereby to overcome this experience of solitude. By the mere fact of being an embodied person according to the image and likeness of God, man is a partner in the mystery of personal revelation of God. The delivered human body is the locus of partnership. Through the redemption our bodies are incorporated into His body, the Church. The redeemed is sustained by His own body, the Eucharist. The new life brought by the Risen body of the Lord manifests itself in and through the body of Christians and our bodies are destined for the resurrection. Body theology tries to situate human body with all other aspects of creation to see anew the glory and goodness of all creation according to the will of the creator.

Body as a Locus of Communion

Through the theology of the body the eternal mystery of communion is becoming closer to us as part of our own body. Human beings are able to realize the mystery of love and communion as personal experience through ones' own body. The starting point of love and communion is the bodily existence itself. The longing for love and communion evolves from the fact of human existence as male and female through which one manifests one's own bodily existence. As Pope John Paul II says, the Christian mystery cannot be understood "unless we keep in mind the 'great mystery' involved in the creation of man as male and female and

the vocation of both to conjugal love."[11] Hence the created body of human is the locus where one finds love and communion possible and the experiences one undergoes determines the meaningfulness of life.

Human Person's embodied existence reveals the fact that one is alone and at the same time in need of others. It is through the body the existential need of love and being loved is fulfilled which opens the possibility of a communion of love. This call to love and to be in communion is inscribed right in our bodies. Remaining in body alone without this experience of true love of communion does not give any sense in human existence. Moreover, it is through the contemplation of the body form of male and female, we realize that we are called to be a gift to one another. We discover that the body is open to the other and has a nuptial meaning. The divine answer to the basic question of solitude which we find in man unfolds in the bodily existence which opens out to a communion. As John Paul II says, the nuptial meaning of the body is the body's "capacity of expressing love: that love precisely in which the person becomes a gift and – by means of this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence."[12] The fulfillment of human being and existence is realized through the lives we live according to the truth of our sexuality. Self-giving love is the meaning of our existence which is imprinted right in the meaning of our sexuality and bodily existence.

By analyzing the two Genesis account of creation Pope John Paul II concludes that the original divinely willed meaning of the body is nuptial, by which he means the body is meant for union, for the giving and receiving of persons as gift, for the community. In this sense all are called to make gifts of themselves for the sake of the kingdom. Making oneself as a gift to other may vary according to the life style one may choose. Through the theological understanding of the body proposed by Pope John Paul II does not advocate centralizing sexuality in the human person, for him it is also not simply a matter of biology or belonging to a subhuman nature. He is totally against objectifying or using bodies simply for personal gratification. Since bodies are created for mutual, self-giving relationship,

11 John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, n. 19.

12 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created them*, A *theology of the Body* (Boston Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

they image the nature of the Creator Himself. However, he tries to identify the sexual desire with the concupiscence like in the traditional theology. The obscuring of the nuptial meaning of the body is the result of this concupiscence which in turn, caused by the fall. Nuptial meaning of the body becomes meaningless when one is disposed to treat others simply as objects for self-gratification. The revealed will of God meant by the nuptial union is that of communion of love.[13]

Communion as Beyond Sexual Union

Without proper communion of love in the embodied human existences, there is an emptiness of solitude. Even in a wonderful human love relationship, one can identify certain kind of unhappy situation. It means that through the sexual union of the bodies this pain of solitude cannot be satisfied fully. Our bodies still look for something else and more. "Sex is not man's "ultimate fulfillment" then marriage would be nirvana. But the union of the sexes at its best is only a glimmer, only a foreshadowing, only a "sacrament" of something far greater."[14] In a sacramental nuptial union there is an anticipation of the union of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:31-32). The pain of human solitude can be removed only in a spiritual "nuptial" communion with Christ and the entire communion of saints. Only this sort of communion could satisfy the human pain of solitude in its entirety. In fact, all bodily desires are searching for a heavenly fulfillment. Hence St. Augustine is just in saying that we're made for communion with Christ, and our hearts are restless until we rest in this eternal embrace.

Thus the body is not to be seen as a mere dwelling place of the soul. Rather, the human person is a composite of body and soul. Consistent with the biblical teaching on the subject, the Pope's teaching sees both body and soul, together, as the image of God. This is a pivotal point for the articulation of authentic Christian teaching wherein the body has true moral significance. Coupled with the basic element of the dignity of man and woman in creation and the communion to which they are called, the Pope speaks of the nuptial meaning of the body. The nuptial meaning of

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13 Isherwood Lisa and Stuart Elizabeth, *Introducing Body Theology*, 74.
14 West Christopher, *Theology of the Body for Beginners* (Collegeville: Ascension Press, 2004) 10.

the body, rooted in creation by an intelligent act of God, means that one cannot simply ignore the natural consequences of actions taken in and through the body or the data seen within human body itself. According to Pope John Paul II, the core of the Gospel is nothing other than the proclamation of a living God who is not only close to us through the body but constantly calling us to a profound communion with himself. This is to properly affirm the indissoluble nature of person, life and bodylines. Pope tries to reiterate that the human life as a life of relationship. Therefore the Pope says that "the meaning of life is found in giving and receiving love, and in this light human sexuality and procreation reach their true and full significance."[15] The call to giving and receiving love is the incarnate vision of the Body. In other words Pope is saying that, the Gospel is a call to communion. In fact all our bodies are longing for this oneness by expressing strong desire for such a communion. As Pope John Paul II asserts in his letter on the new millennium, "to make the Church the home and school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings."[16] The spousal theology is nothing other than a pointer to this mystery. Through the nuptial analogy we are led into the analogy of faith which eventually leads all in to a proper communion sanctorum.

The logic of communion which is expressed through the nuptial image is explained through the body theology is collapsing when we bring the celibate life into it. Calling of someone to be with Christ belong to the very mystery of his kingdom. Here on earth they are called by Christ to "skip"[17] the marital sacramental life, so that they may be able to devote themselves fully for the sake of the "marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19). In them the ultimate fulfillment of bodily existence is anticipated and revealed. In an age where there are many who criticize, demanding an end to celibate life, it is all the more necessary to discuss it over again. This skipping demands lots of heroism and grace. Because of modern body exposing culture of the media and the ignorance of the relational meaning of embodied reality, there is a danger of losing sight of this

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15 John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, n. 81.

16 West Christopher, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 7.

17 West Christopher, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 30.

eternal union as one's own ultimate fulfillment. The logic of celibacy is to be seen in the context of heavenly communion. "Only a person who is free from the compulsion of lust is capable of being a true gift to other."[18] When lived authentically, Christian celibacy isn't a rejection of sexuality and our call to union. It actually points to their ultimate fulfillment. Those who sacrifice marriage "for the sake of the kingdom" (Mt 19:12) do so in order to devote all of their energies and desires to the heavenly marriage that alone can satisfy the marriage of Christ and the Church. In a way, they are "skipping" the sacrament (the earthly sign) in anticipation of the ultimate reality.[19] By doing so, celibate men and women declare to the world that the kingdom of God is here (Mt 12:28).

God designed the union of man for woman and woman for man as a model of His own eternal exchange of love. And right from the beginning, the union of man and woman foreshadows our eternal destiny of union with God through Christ. Hence St. Paul says, the "one flesh" union is "a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31-32). The Bible uses the spousal love more than any other images to help us to understand God's eternal plan for humanity. God wants to be in communion with us like in the marriage union (Hos 2:19) to live with us in His eternal exchange of love. And He wanted this great model of marriage to be plain and obvious to us that he impressed an image of it in our very being by creating us male and female and calling us to be in communion as in one flesh. Pope John Paul II claims that human being "not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion to be "fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28), then, is nothing but a call to live in communion as God's own image in which we're made to love as God loves.[20]

As a sacrament, marriage is only an earthly sign of the heavenly reality. We no longer need signs to point us to heaven, when we are already in heaven. The "marriage of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7) the union of love we all desire will be eternally consummated. "For man, this

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18 West Christopher, *Theology of the Body for Beginners,* 30.

19 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created them,* 163.

20 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created them,* 391.

consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation. Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, 'the holy city' of God, 'the Bride, the wife of the Lamb'" (CCC, n. 1045). This eternal reality is what the "one flesh" union foreshadows from the beginning (Eph 5:31-32). Hence, in the resurrection of the body we may rediscover in an eternal dimension the same nuptial meaning of the body in the meeting with the mystery of the living God face to face.[21] This is going to be completely a new experience and hence the Pope says beyond than anyone can imagine, "the spousal meaning of being a body, will therefore, be realized as a meaning that is perfectly personal and communitarian at the same time."[22]

When we analyze our origin in creation, life in history and destiny in heaven, we will be able to understand the meaning of Christian vocations of celibacy and marriage. Both vocations are authentic living out of the most profound truth of who we are as males and females. One can very well say, marriage, in a different way anticipates heaven, "in the joys of their love (God gives spouses) here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feasts of the Lamb" (CCC, n.1642). Marriage, in order to bring the proper happiness what it meant to be, the spouses must live according to the intention of God. This means they must contend diligently with the effects of sin. Marriage never justifies lust. As a sacrament, marriage is meant to symbolize the union of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32). The language of the body which lived out through the marital union is the expression of God's free, total, faithful, and fruitful love. In fact, the couple is committing to this fruitful love, when the sacrament of marriage is administered to them. They are promising to each other that they are ready to give themselves fully to the other as a total and free gift.

The "yes" word which the spouses promise at the altar is meant to express with their bodies whenever they become one flesh. "Indeed the very words 'I take you to be my wife my husband,'" the Pope says, "can be fulfilled only by means of conjugal intercourse."[23] Sexual union is

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21 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created them*, 399.

22 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created them*, 533.

23 John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created them*, 534.

meant to be the renewal of wedding vows. The Church's sexual ethic begins to make sense when viewed through this lens. It's not a prudish list of prohibitions. It's a call to embrace our own greatness and our own God-like dignity. It is also a call to live the love we're created for. Since a prophet is one who proclaims God's love. Pope John Paul II describes the body and sexual union as "prophetic."[24] But, he adds, we must be careful to distinguish between true and false prophets. If we can speak the truth with our bodies, we can also speak lies. The body, in the full truth of its masculinity and femininity, proclaims the divine mystery in the world. What's the divine mystery? As the Catechism says, "God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange" (CCC, n.221).

Nuptial love as an analogy of communion

The marital love exercised through the body is perfect analogy of communion. The fundamental premise of Pope John Paul II is that the body reveals God. When we look at male and female, the very structure of the body tells us that it is made for union. Neither male and male nor female and female are made for nuptial union. Only male and female are made for nuptial union. This union, however, isn't self-centered and individualistic. It is meant to be a union and a communion of self-giving love. In spousal love, the two are no longer two but one. From the beginning, God designed married love in this way, "this is why a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and the two shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Therefore through the sexual union something is done to the core of the spouse's being and it is not a mere superficial union. Sexual act is not an act of mere body; it is the act of the whole person.[25]

In the new covenant, Jesus elevates marriage to a sacramental sign. Marriage no longer simply represents the natural union of man and woman but makes visible Christ's total and irrevocable gift of Himself to

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24 John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, 51.

25 Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996) 29.

the Church. Just as He gave Himself away to the Church so that He could be one with the Church always (Ephesians 5:31-32), so husband and wife are called to give themselves away so as to image the oneness of Christ and the Church. This self-gift doesn't happen in some ultra-spiritual realm but in the body. Christ said, "This is my body, given up for you."[26] Right before our eyes we see union and communion, two and one, giving and receiving. This aspect of being one before the Lord through giving and receiving is the fundamental characteristic of communion in the Christian life.

"Human sexuality is our human capacity as whole persons to enter into life-giving love giving union in and through the body in ways that are appropriate."[27] It belongs to human beings and therefore it is totally human. Some describes sex as an animalistic drive which widely seen in inferior species than man. Since there is a giving and receiving of the gift of the person involved in sex, it is something personal. It is basically sharing of the personal power in which all the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of human person is involved. Hence sexuality is a mutual sharing of the self-gift of the person. The important characteristic of sharing is giving and receiving and not giving and getting or taking. In that sense only persons can be sexual. Here again the total sharing of the persons cannot be restricted to certain bodily organs and activities nor is it confined to certain condition of life. It is to be considered as a total capacity of the whole person in self-gift.[28]

The point is that human sexual union differs radically from the mating of animals. If they were the same, Adam would have found plenty of "helpers" among the animals. But in naming the animals he realized he was different; he alone was a person called to love with his body in God's image. Upon the sight of the woman the man immediately declares: "This at last is bone of my-bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). That is to say, "Finally, there is a person whom I can love." It is a gift and a capacity of a person to love and share. As in the case of perfect and self-giving love in marriage human persons are called to be persons of

26 Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 95.

27 Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 104.

28 Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 104.

love in communion by sharing the benefits of the whole person for the other.

Since human person is always "being gift", expression of oneself through his or her sexuality becomes always a gift. As John Paul II says fundamental character of the human body has a nuptial meaning and therefore the entire life of the person through the body of the whole person destined in love union and life giving which is appropriate to one's own life and commitment. When one interprets sexuality as an ability to take and be taken just for the sake of pleasure or gain, it is not only the violation of the body of the whole person but also making body of the person into a mere object. The sexual union is not a superficial union but rather it reaches to the very core of the human's being. The man and woman is visible sign of the self-giving union between Christ and the Church. "Because of the intrinsic unity of love giving and life giving in human intercourse – blocking, interrupting or chemically negating the act is inherently wrong and ultimately devastating to both persons. If intercourse is lived in the fashion, the body is made to express only stimulation of total self-gift. The entire body self-acts dishonestly in a matter of utmost seriousness at the heart of the covenantal relationship and is violated at the depth of the real symbol."[29] Treating person as mere object and other as mere means of personal gain is the violation of communion and it undermines the basic call of a person to be in communion.

Challenges against the Body as Communion

Many Christians throughout the centuries considered body as something unworthy or even evil. There are many reasons for the negative attitude towards body; as far as the communion is concerned we may point some of them in nutshell.[30]

Various form of dualism. Hellenistic philosophy did not directly advocate any kind of hatred towards body. They taught that unlike soul body is prone to change, disease and destabilization of the self. This attitude let them to think about the need of controlling and policing the body through certain ascetic practices. The Gnostic influence in

29 Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 2.
30 Isherwood Lisa and Stuart Elizabeth, *Introducing Body Theology*, 8.

Christianity caused the rejection of the material world by thinking that they could take a flight to heaven through the soul. "Their path of asceticism distorted the meaning of the body sexuality and male – female relations."[31]

Aristotelian revivalism of 13th century ruled out the possibility of Platonic dualism but tendency of intellectualization of the body by the scholasticism led to a kind of negative attitude towards sex, even sex in the wedlock considered at this time as a venial sin. They believed one cannot explain soul by the body but body by soul, the answer to the unity of man's nature lies in the soul. Body and soul are not separate entities. In this regard, another thing is to be noted that of spiritualization of the bodylines. As we have already seen the separation of soul and body is utterly alien to the Hebrew Bible so that the soul can never be considered as an entity to be treated in and for it. But there is a strong tendency in the Christian tradition to spiritualize the bodylines of human beings through ministries. In Christianity there was a tendency of subordinating or even postponing the care of the body in favor of the care for the soul.

Technological development of the twentieth century resulted in considering man artifact. As a result, especially in the west, many perceive living body as an instrumental like a communication centre or a material residence for the person who inhabits it. Each individual owns it an absolute private property. Body when understood instrumentally there is a denial of indissoluble union that constitutes the human person.[32] Body is also considered as a material organism or instrument for procreation through sexual activity by giving relational value. Body is considered merely as a property of human. Through the instrumentalization of the body the general tendency has developed in the line of using the body according to the choice of the person. As a result we have a famous slogan from the feminists in favor of abortion in "woman's body, woman's choice."

Modern means of communication media disorient the body through a profit motive culture. The sexual confusion media that creates, absolutizing the value system and relativizing religious values by privatizing

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31 Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 104.
32 West Christopher, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 25.

the conscience, are distorting the real situation of the body. When we consider the world in which we live, the tactics of the sinful bodies are so powerful to twist and disorient our desire for heaven and final destiny of humanity. Confession is so prevalent in our world and in our own hearts is nothing but the human desire for heaven gone berserk. As G.K. Chesterton put it, "Every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God."

Conclusions

1. The language of Christianity is being the language of the body, theology of the body is very important as far as modern theology is concerned. It is because of the incarnation through which God has taken a body. We are created in the body and therefore body is real and we are waiting in hope for the glorification of the body through resurrection.

2. Scriptures attest to this fact of the body as holistic and beautiful. Bible presents before us body as a relational reality and therefore it is communion.

3. The basic nature of man's loneliness is overcome by marriage. The sexual union in the sacramental marital communion is to lead the renewal of the marital vow and not something subhuman.

4. The marital union is only a foreshadow of the real communion in heaven. It is the sacramental union that which leads to the eternal union with lamb Celibate life skips something for the sake of the kingdom.

5. The marital union does not satisfy the aching of the bodies until it reaches a fruitful and eternal communion with God.

6. Christian faith encounters today many challenges against the body and its meaning through the instrumentalization of it.

7. The Christian vocation is to give the proper value to our human bodies in tune with the divine economy of salvation. The salvation is a reality of our bodies and Jesus Christ the son of God has won it for us through his own body which is being continued in history through his body, the Church.

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Body and Spirituality

Saviomma Thattamparampil

Spirituality in traditional understanding almost always meant as opposition to the world and body. But new strides in spiritual theology try to integrate spirituality with body. It implies many things. For example, it raises questions related to sexuality and spirituality, bodily experiences and spirituality etc. In this article, the author exposes scope for a holistic, body-based spirituality. It sees the body as the vehicle of the spirit, a friend, not an enemy of the spirit. Offering preliminary reflections on this theme, she argues that it will help to heal the dichotomy between the spiritual and the bodily, the secular and the sacred, and men and women. The author Saviomma Thattamparampil holds a doctorate in spiritual theology and is actively involved in women empowerment, community development programs in Bangalore.

Introduction

"Spirituality" generally can be referred to a 'lived experience and an academic discipline.' But over the last few decades, the term spirituality has widened itself to the extent that it could encompass, not only the whole life of faith but also the whole person, with its bodily, psychological, social and political dimensions. Until the Second Vatican Council, spirituality had been defined in contrast to matter, the world, the physical; in terms of temporal vs. eternal life; or individual piety vs. social activity. This polarization is slowly being overcome. In the first instance, spirituality is understood as the mental attitude with which people conduct their lives and labour, and if it is conducted positively, now and then a moment of transcendence will occur. Each person has to discover his or her own roots in order to realize the personal context of his or her life. Therefore, a contextual spirituality starts from the concrete world and shared life

situation. Christian spirituality is thus an attitude oriented towards the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ inspiring us to live in justice and love, in liberty and authenticity, and, moving out from there, in availability for God and for people, a life in which this Spirit moves freely.

"Body", often stands for 'the human complex'. Basing on the writing of St. Paul: "... May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound ..." (1Thess.5:23), the early Eastern fathers made a careful distinction in the human complex at three principles of activity: *anima, animus* and *spiritus. Anima* controls the life of the body. It regulates the bodily functions, and is present everywhere. It is ready to act with a wisdom and skill that is beyond us. *Animus* is the conscious part in us, the part that thinks, reasons, decides on courses of action, and gives our human existence its personal and responsible character. *Spiritus* acts in meta-rational ways. It is a certain power of loving, of tending towards, of attaching itself. It is in essence love, tendency, desire, a silent clasping of the true, the good, and the beauty of God.[1]

Man-woman: Body-soul-spirit-entity

The body is visible and the soul is invisible. The soul comes from God and is divine; body may help the soul to inherit the glory above by means of a struggle and wrestling with things below. Soul may draw to itself and raise to heaven the lower nature gradually by freeing it from its grossness. So body is not merely ephemeral. It is created reality with a destiny in God's providence, and the soul is not so divine as to keep its own without a struggle. So everything created has its place in God's plan, and God upholds it in his ineffable grace.[2] We are becoming more aware of the fact that there is no separate human soul (spirit) without the body: mind, imagination and emotion. James Nelson believes that the way we experience ourselves as bodies, in fact stimulates our way of thinking and feeling about God.[3]

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1 J. M. De'Chanet, *Christian Yoga*, 4 th ed. (Britain: Search Press, 1984), pp. 63-66.

2 Cf. C. M. Vadakkekara (ed), *Divine Grace and Human Response* (Bangalore: Asirvanam Benedictine Monastery, 1981) pp. 396-397.

3 James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: MN: Augsburg, 1978), pp. 22-23.

The spiritual tradition of East attaches great importance to the body in meditations from yoga to zen. The Budhists or Hindus do not reach enlightenment through some purely spiritual activity of mind but through a long and rigorous training in breathing, in posture and in diet. This training is not of the mind alone or of the body alone but of the body-person, of the mind-soul–body.

It is true that certain currents of Christian spirituality were influenced by a neo-Platonic rejection of matter. However, let us never forget that authentic Christianity follows a 'sacramental dimension' in the human body, in the flowers of the field and in the whole material world. "Is not ...the body more than clothing?" Jesus asked (Matt.6: 25), as if to say that the body is the primary gift of our heavenly Father. And at the last Supper he uttered those shattering words that we call the mystery of faith: "This is my body" (Matt.26: 26).

Spiritual Body

Thomas Aquinas observes that our essence: the soul-form preceded our existence in time and space. In his often cited saying *anima forma corporis*, he mentions that our soul gives form to our body and there with to our spirit, heart, mind and will, to our memory, imagination and the anticipated ones. Before we existed in time as the child of this or that set of parents, *we were, are, and remain in essence as children of God* by virtue of our creation, later by our redemption and adoption. Thus our soul, so to speak 'inhales the Holy Spirit and exhales love' into the world.[4]

There is nothing particularly esoteric for observing an inner or spiritual body, in which organs such as heart and other elements as blood could be distinguished. What is to be stressed here is that these organs and elements are not metaphorical but real. Here we can make a link to the *transverberation* – piercing of the heart of St.Teresa of Avila with a fiery lance and the 'holy life force,' which she experienced in an unusual mystical phenomenon that was spiritual as well as physical. She speaks of her heart and other entrails being pierced and transformed into fire. This mystical gift affected the

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4 Robert Barron, *Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), p. 68.

total personality of Teresa; and the heart of Teresa became a point of contact between man's need for new life in God's fullness. Teresa re-lived the mystery of virgin motherhood. This pierced heart of Teresa could be called a Christian archetype;[5] and such archetypes are realities that take place beyond or above time in varying circumstances and degrees verified or incarnated in human history. Its salvific and cosmic significance could be understood, if we link the *transverberation* of Teresa with Mary and the prophecy of Simeon (Lk 2: 33-35).[6]

This experience, the 'holy life force' in her spiritual realm could be interlinked with the term *anima*, the feminine receptive life force of the psyche that corresponds to the maternal *eros*. Carl Jung, in his psycho-analytical development of *animae*, states that every man carries within him the eternal image of a woman, the feminine quality called as *anima* that corresponds to the maternal *eros* within him; and in the same way every woman has her inborn image of man, the masculine quality called *animus* that corresponds to the paternal *logos* within her. The *anima* concerns with relationship, values, and reaches out into communities; whereas the *animus* refers to the ability to discriminate, differentiate, define and rationalize.[7] These generalizations are difficult to make and sustain; yet this contra-sexual side of the psyche puts a man or woman in touch with the fundamental sources of life force.

Body: Male and Female God created Them

In the Bible, humanity is created male and female in God's image (Gen.1: 27) and that the distinction between man and woman is placed

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5 This aspect of Christian archetype seems to be found in the vision of Catherine Laboure in 1830. In recent years, Rene Laurentin has presented it powerfully in which the pierced heart of the woman responds to Christ's heart surrounded by thorns, and the cross is supported by the 'M' that stands for the mystery of the woman. Noel O' Donoghue, *Mystics for Our Time* (Edinburgh: T & Clark, 1989), p.16.

6 *Testimonies*, 32:1, in *Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, Tra.Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Trivandrum – Kerala, Carmel International Publishing House, 2001).

7 C.G. Jung, "The Practice of Psychotherapy," in *Collected Works of Carl G. Jung*, Vol.17 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 197-199; John Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrims* (New York: Paulist Press, 1963), pp.166-170.

after their original unity (Gen.2: 18-23). From the Creation accounts, it is clear that there is separation as well as union between men and women. However, for countless ages, human culture and society have emphasized the differences between women and men rather than their underlying unity. Despite the endless fascination of the sexes for each other, social customs have sharply distinguished femaleness from maleness and sexual morality has been concerned with keeping men and women apart. Our society has taught us to regard the opposite sex with suspicion.

Since most cultures have been patriarchal or dominated by men, women are usually viewed as an oppressed group in the society. The general assumption is that men have all the power and the women are the losers. However, in analyzing the male-female antagonism, we come to see that both men and women are the losers. We are deprived of that healthy wholeness. Or, rather deprived of holiness that comes from the integration of both the masculine and the feminine in our lives as men or women. Hence, it is advisable to make a study on the differences in 'Female and Male.'

i. Cycling in women

For centuries, the difference between men and women were socially defined and distorted through a lens of sexism[8] in which men assumed superiority over women and maintained it through domination. The vision of equality between the sexes has narrowed the possibilities for discovery of what truly exists within a man and within a woman.

The fundamental biological difference between men and women is that the latter have two X chromosomes whereas the male one X and one Y chromosomes. Although the rest of the chromosomal make up of men and women is the same, the genetic differences caused by the differences in the sex chromosomes are responsible for all differences between the sexes.

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8 Sexism is an unequal power relationship that exists between the sexes (men and women), and defined as 'control over a woman's labour, sexuality and fertility.' It is characterized by dominance and subordinance in which male rules female, and thus violates the human rights of women. Prasanna Kumari, ed., *Feminist Theology: Perspectives and Praxis* (Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1999), p.31.

The Y chromosome contains the genes for development of the testes - which produce the male sex hormone testosterone. Although this hormone is also present in women, the larger amounts in males accounts for the male primary and secondary sexual characteristics including body fat distribution and muscle bulk. Without testosterone, all men would be women! On the converse, females develop ovaries right from the embryonic stage, which produce oestrogen leading to the development of female sexual characteristics. These fundamental differences in hormones account for the differences observed between the sexes, such as biomechanical, physical size, body fat distribution and percentage, menstruation, sperm production, dietary requirements, puberty and ageing, psychology and behaviour.

ii. Different Emotional Needs

Analyzing the 'primary love needs' of women and men, they are twelve in number. To be specific, women need to receive: 'caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance;' whereas men need to receive: 'trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval and encouragement.' Certainly every man and woman ultimately needs all twelve kinds of love. To acknowledge the six kinds of love primarily needed by women does not imply that men do not need these kinds of love.

iii. Anatomical and functional differences in Left and Right brain

The right and left sides of cerebrum are almost completely separate, mirror images of one another.[9] Females on average have a larger deep limbic brain system than males. This gives females several advantages and disadvantages. Women are more in touch with their feelings and they have an increased ability to bond (which is why women are primary the caretakers for children). Men tend to be higher in independence, dominance, spatial, rank-related aggression, etc. Females have a more acute sense of smell, likely to have developed from an evolutionary need for the mother to recognize her young. Having a large deep limbic system leaves a female somewhat more susceptible to depression, especially at

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9 For more detail, Sally Springer and George Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain* (W.H.Freeman, 1985).

times of significant hormonal changes such as the onset of puberty, before menses, after the birth of a child and at menopause.[10]

Body Functions

The two hemispheres are connected at one point by what is called the corpus callosum, a bundle of nerve fibers that acts as a bridge across which the hemispheres communicate with one another. Left side sends and receives messages to the right side of the body, and vice versa. Rational, logical and thinking functions tend to be located in the left hemisphere; and the creative, intuitive and feeling functions tend to be located in the right hemisphere. More men are left-brain dominant, whereas more women are right-brain dominant.[11]

The conclusion that neuroscience has made great strides in the 1990s, and scientifically proved the differences between the brains of males and females. This knowledge could not in theory be used to justify misogyny and prejudice against women, nor do these differences mean a superiority and/or inferiority between men and women. These findings have important implications for our study on "masculinity--femininity" of men and women. i) Some physiological basis for typically masculine and typically feminine modes of behavior. To be logical and orderly in their approach to things and in preferring to analyze and judge, men tend to use their left brain more. To be relational and harmonious in their approach to people and in preferring to accept and connect, women tend to use their right brain more. ii) Psychology of knowledge: Conceptual and analytical knowledge is largely a left brain function, whereas experiential knowledge and seeing the relations between things and how they affect people are for the most part, right brain functions. To understand anything really well, we have to use both sides of our brain. Full human knowledge is always integrated and holistic.

Spiritual insight and intuition come mostly through the right brain, so to recognize and understand what is going on inside, man needs fine ways to raise his right-brain consciousness. One of the best ways to do

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10 Renato M.E.Sabbhatini, Articles of study lectures (USA).

11 Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos, *The Wild Man's Journey* (USA, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988), pp.141-143

this is paying attention to dreams. As soon as we go to sleep, the left brain shuts down for the night and the right brain takes over. By trying to remember dreams and learning how to interpret them, we can greatly develop our spiritual self-awareness.[12]

Another helpful technique for getting in touch with the right brain and allowing it to operate more freely is spiritual journaling.[13] It is a technique of writing everyday in such a way as to allow the unconscious to come to the surface and unexpressed thoughts to be verbalized. In general we need to open up the non-rational right brain by means of lightweight as art, music, poetry, drama, dance, prayer, silence so on.

Body: Task of Integrating Sexuality and Spirituality

Sexuality is a divine gift (cf. Gen 1:17), and divine approval makes sexuality a grace, given for enriching life that provides us with repeated opportunities to experience our Creator. In this understanding, sexuality and spirituality are not two opposing poles. Both have to do with the life force, and both require an unveiling of the self that leads to total vulnerability and surrender.[14] Sexuality includes gender (masculine and feminine) - identity and role, and sex includes anatomy and physiology.

Masculine energy is resolute, decisive and outgoing. It is oriented towards work, task and accomplishment. Feminine energy, on the other hand, is oriented towards inner, toward union, towards relationship. It is attuned to feeling and connectedness. It is usually concerned with people before principles. Masculine and feminine are not accidents of human nature. Both are essential determinants of human nature of male and female.

The spiritually whole person integrates within himself or herself both the masculine and feminine dimensions of the human spirit. He or

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12 Ann Faraday, *Dream Power* (Berkley Publishing Group, 1986); Morton Kelsey, *Dreams: A Way to Listen to God* (Paulist Press, 1978).

13 Ira Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Guide for Using the Intensive Journal Process*(Dialogue House, 1977); Tristine Rainer, *The New Diary: How to Use a Journal for Self-Guidance and Expanded Creativity* (J.P.Tarcher, 1979).

14 Niloufer Harben, "Dancing towards the Light: Some Perspectives on Sexuality and Spirituality," in *God's Image* 3 (2001), pp. 8-19.

she is androgynous,[15] in the best sense of terms that is derived from the two Greek words meaning "man and woman". Neither side dominates, because each energizes the other. It is a balanced interplay of both masculine and feminine. It creates a new paradigm – a new image of what it means to be human.

Though sexuality is a powerful energizing aspect in body-spiritual development, yet in the context of women's body, often it has been discounted and even looked upon with contempt. One of the reasons is that some of the interpretations of the Biblical writings (Sirach 25: 13-26:1 and 42:14a). It gives a very negative impression on women and their bodies; woman is almost a chattel of man who could dispose of her for personal advantage. In their relationship to men, women are never autonomous individuals or equals to men with a spiritual embodiment.[16]

Another reason for this negation is the dualism of Greek philosophy: the pairs of the opposite sex places opposition to each other, which applies an implied hierarchy where one of the pair (male) is seen as superior and the other (female) is seen as inferior, and considering it as a hindrance to the higher life of the other. Through the logic of these sexual dualisms, men associate themselves as superior with the spirit (mind) and they identify women as inferior in connection with the body (matter); thereby assume the need for higher to control the lower one, promoting inequality among the sexes; and it also makes them sexy and desirable for it.[17] Due to this body-spirit dualism, there came the sexuality -- spirituality separation.

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15 Androgyny is the ability to be masculine in a womanly way and to be feminine in a manly way. It is the capacity of the spiritually whole person to be both male and female and to use the energies from both in a decisive yet creative manner. An androgynous person distinguishes the masculine from the feminine, which is the male gift, but also unites the masculine and the feminine, which is the female gift. Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos, *The Wild Man's Journey*, p. 16.

16 Warren C. Trenchard, *Ben Sira's View of Women: A Literary Analysis*, Brown Judaic Studies 38, (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 172-173; Alfred Edersheim,"Ecclessiasticus", in *The Holy Bible According to the Authorized version* (AD 1611) ... Apocrypha 2:1-123, Ed. Henry Wace (London: John Murray Pub., 1888), p. 203

17 Jose Parappally, "Toward a Mature Spiriuality for Today, Declining and Emerging Paradigms," *Vidyajyoti,* Vol. 68, No.1 (January 2004), p. 25.

Sexuality has to do with our entire being as body-spirit creatures involving our self-image, our body-image, our self-esteem, our desire for connectedness and capacity for relationship. It takes a holistic approach to the whole life that brings the constructive aspect: life giving - affirming - aspect into every relationship, allowing both women and men to reclaim their bodies and also their whole selves as sexual beings. It has to do with the whole being of a person: how we think and feel about ourselves, the way we relate both with ourselves and with others physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Among others, it also includes our social image, our sense of acceptance and recognition by others.

It is sexuality that makes women vulnerable to love, that they cannot help but be moved to serve; and the physicality of making love becomes a supreme moment of spirituality. The very vulnerability of the act makes it an act of self-giving, a new way of experiencing God who has great love for human being; thereby transforming (self-transcending) and elevating human consciousness from a mere physical union.[18] Vatican II has made an attempt to give an integrated vision, reinstalling the body in its honorable place: "Though made up of body and soul, man is one.... He is obliged to regard his body as good and honorable since God has created it and will raise it up on last day."[19]

Wonder of the Womb

Women bring to academia the knowledge derived from the 'lived experience.' Menstruation is a powerful symbol of women's bonding, which binds every mother and daughter so closely in their bodies, and is a perceptible symbol of sexual maturity. Blood is the symbol of life which women shed month after month for the continuation of human race.

Splendor of Birthing and Nurturing

Women have an intimate relationship with life and its processes: pregnancy, birthing, nurturing and life sustenance. Pregnancy is something that affects woman's whole being - mind, body and spirit /soul. In the creative act of God, woman holds a place very close to the creator. She

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18 Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, "Mothering God," eds., Evelyn Monteiro, and Kochurani Abraham, *Concerns of Women* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publication, 2005), p.143.

19 *G.S.*, No.14.

conceives life in her flesh, feeds it to growth, thus giving form and shape to the human person to be born (Gen. 1:27). In a woman's life, the mystery of pregnancy becomes a visible expression of the sacramental love that Jesus instituted in the Eucharist.[20] A woman feeds the child within her womb with her own flesh and blood; theologically Christ nourishes the Church with His own body and blood (Mt: 26: 20-30; Jn 13:21-30).

Pregnancy also throws light on spiritual fruitfulness. Consecrated virginity when lived in its radicalism generates spiritual fecundity though the person is physically barren; for, love is always fecund and generates life leading to the creation of a new humanity. Here, the woman's body – motherhood as a spiritual unit, - the vehicle of communion of the Spirit, creates the brotherhood and sisterhood of the human family, not born of the flesh nor the desire of man but the will of God (cf. Jn. 1:13). Thus the paradoxical promise of a virgin is fulfilled. The Word continues to become flesh in a virgin – man /woman who is a celibate lover of God. The one who conceives love, gives birth to life in all its abundance.

Mothering is a recreation of the mystery of the Divine presence. The womb itself is a constant reminder of the Eternal mother, a place of security to which one unconsciously try to return again and again. The interconnectedness between mother and child in her womb is a unique experience of relationship that has nothing comparable in man's experience. Suckling a child at the breast is a uniquely woman-experience that makes present the Divine in a very real way. Perhaps, this might be the reason for having some of the ancient cultures, 'concept of Divine as woman' that was specifically noticed in pre-Aryan India. Women's nurturing experience also reflects on the woman's unique capacity to make flesh, not only in her own womb but also "in the wider womb of the world."[21] It is to this womb that God entrusts, the cosmic connections embodied in human flesh, recalling Yahweh who holds us within the divine womb and gives birth to the divine image.

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20 Kochurani Abraham, "Woman the Life-Giver," in *Concerns of Women*, p. 44.

21 Miriam Therese Winter, *Woman Prayer Woman Song: Resources for Ritual* (New York: Collins Dove, 1987), p.79.

For women, mothering experiences are powerful symbols of empowerment, enabling them a new vision of meaning and action, inviting them to take stock of their lives: their yesterdays, todays and tomorrows into the process of becoming. In the "take and eat" that symbolizes all of motherhood, Christian women re-live Jesus' Eucharistic generosity. Body and blood are spent not just in the feeding of their young within the womb and at their breast but also in the ongoing sacrifice that is motherhood.[22] In the hungry guzzling of their infants, women embody also Yahweh's promise that "you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast, that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom" (Is 66: 11).

Transitional stage of Menopause/midlife

Currently many people generally prefer to use the term "midlife transition". Fact is that many women, also a few men in all walks of life, in all cultures, married or single, secular or religious, experience a phenomenon of uncertainty (crisis) and reappraisal roughly between 35-45 years of their life. In the circle of women religious, because of their specific choice of life, often they are immune to the vicissitudes of life; yet a good number of them do face the challenges of menopause with all its implications. The past comes up as searching for new directions and clarity. They begin to feel insecure and some experience a profound emotional crisis in the form of an eruption of a sexual feeling, a hunger for physical closeness and affection, or a feeling of inadequacy, and the experience of discomfort and confusion. Some may turn workaholic, and they get caught in depression. Certainly there is the need for the spiritual and psychological assistance for a happy and smooth journey forward.

There is a sort of conversion involved in the recovery from midlife crisis. Conversion brings a sense of unification to those who have struggled with the feeling of inner division. In as much as conversion changes a person's perspective, some discomforts or disorientations are unavoidable. Conversion at midlife frequently invites persons to leave behind some of

22 Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, "Mothering God," p .132.

their most cherished assumptions especially the assumption that they are in charge of their lives. Midlife brings a unified view of our human existence, in which body soul-spirit are integrated. It is a process of liberation from darkness to light. This helps one to liberate from all sorts of darkness of one's life.[23]

The spirituality of midlife is found throughout the Christian tradition as the period of turmoil and change. St. Teresa at midlife left behind her settled way of life to embark the career of reformer. Her spirituality from that point is an earnest quest for closer union with God. St. Ignatius of Loyola, in choosing for himself a life of service dedicated to God and the Church went through midlife decision-making process, which formed the basis for "Spiritual Exercises". For Teresa and Ignatius midlife held the promise of spiritual renewal. For some others who have only had a minimal interest in their faith-journey earlier, find new vitality and an increased meaning in midlife.

Conclusion

We have been trying to indicate some dimensions of "Body and Spirituality", giving special emphasis to the masculine-feminine aspects of body spirituality. Every man/woman is a human person consisting of body-soul-spirit entity. Today we are becoming more aware of the fact that there is no separate human soul/spirit without the body: mind, imagination and emotion. Masculine-feminine dimension of human spirit is a powerful energizing aspect in bodily-spiritual development, since both are essential determinants of human nature of males and females. Since it is a divine gift from God, there is a need for integrating the sexuality in a healthy way in the development of spiritually whole person.

It is this holistic approach towards sexuality that roots women's spirituality in the ordinary life, which recognizes no boundaries between the sacred and profane. It means God communicates himself to us in various and mysterious ways in our everyday life. This holistic approach to spirituality helps both the consecrated persons and laity to be integrated personalities.

23 Chackochen, "Mid-Life Transition and Spiritual Assistance in the Life of Religious," *Students' Forum*, (Bangalore: IIS Publications, 1996), pp. 51,131-132.

A holistic–ecological spirituality that is body-based has an important role to restore body - sexuality to its right place in spirituality. It sees the body as the vehicle of the spirit, a friend, not an enemy of the spirit. It will help to heal the dichotomy between the spiritual and the bodily, the secular and the sacred. To grow in the spirit we need to honour our body and take care of our body. Sexuality defines women's capacity to bind them to the nature and the God within. God's intervention in nature means that Spirit is not set apart from nature, but rather it is the ground of nature, and indeed of all manifestation! Women's special association with embodied nature needs to be honored, cherished and celebrated, because of this connectivity between women and nature; it is a source for female power and liberation.

To conclude, all the great mystics in describing their meetings with the Divine, fall back to sexual images such as 'rapture' or 'ecstasy' or 'union' or 'penetration'. In doing so they suggest that the body aspect of sexual and spiritual are closely integrated.

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Ownership of the Human Body

Scaria Kanniyakonil

Who owns the body is an intriguing question which invites complex answers. This essay reviews three prominent approaches to this question. The naturalistic approach and the Christian approach regard God as the owner of the human body. Modernist philosophers argue that human being is the owner; whereas, socialist philosophy holds that society has dominion over human bodies. These approaches have ramifications for issues related to suicide, organ donation, mutilation, experiments on human body, etc. Author of this essay, Dr.Scaria Kanniyakonil, is professor of moral theology at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam.

Both in theology as well as philosophy, ownership of the human body is a topic of heated debate. It is assumed that individual is an autonomous subject, his or her body is his or her private property and that the person is thus the sovereign authority and possesses property rights over his or her body. Bu there are others who argue that individuals have no right over their body. The concept of body-ownership is morally and epistemologically problematic.[1] Today many ethicists ask whether human beings enjoy property rights over their body parts.[2] There are

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1 Henk A. M. J. Ten Have & Jos V. M. Welie, "Medicine, Ownership, and the Human Body," in Henk A. M. J. Ten Have, Jos V. M. Welief & Stuart F. Spicker (eds.), *Ownership of the Human Body: Philosophical Considerations on the Use of the Human Body and its Parts in Health care* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publications, 1998) 2.

2 Lori Andrews, 'My Body, My Property,' *Hastings Center Report* 16 (1986) 28-38; Courtney Campbell, "Body, Self, and the Property Paradigm," *Hastings Center Report* 22 (1992) 34-43; John Harvey, "Paying Organ Donors," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 16 (1990) 117-119.

different answers to this question. We can find different approaches concerning the question of the ownership of the human body. The naturalistic approach and the Christian approach regard God as the owner of the human body. Modernist philosophers argue that human being is the owner; whereas, socialist philosophy holds that society has authority over human bodies. In this paper we will briefly survey the history of the thought on the ownership of human body.

1. Naturalistic Approach

Nature has an intrinsic order that is the norm of morality. This is the concept of Greek philosophy. Nature has been ordered by God. Therefore, it is always right and beautiful. Only the unnatural can be considered wrong, bad, and ugly. For instance, disease is an unnatural disorder. It is because of this that the surgical amputation or mutilation of a limb is permitted. The preservation of the natural order, and its restoration when it is lost, are moral duties. The divine reason is written in nature, it is the main criterion of morality.[3] Moral virtue is the capacity to live in accordance with nature, with total indifference to pleasure and pain, health and disease, life and death. Man is not proprietor of his life, only administrator and warden, and must accept natural events magnanimously. Life is not the private property of individuals, but a gift of nature and God.[4]

The naturalistic traditions never take the legal aspect of ownership or property as applicable to the human body. Roman Law describes that the human body is not something external. Consequently there is no sense in speaking about 'dominion or property'. According to Ulpian, man/woman is not the owner of his/her members. Hence human being is not the owner of his/her body rather God is the owner of human body, who is the creator of life. Man/woman is the administrator (*et custos*) of this gift of life. This highlights the moral prohibition against self-mutilation and suicide.[5] The living human body was considered a

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3 C. Boorse, "On the Distinction between Disease and Illness," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 5 (1975) 49-68.

4 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," in Henk A. M. J. Ten Have, Jos V. M. Welief & Stuart F. Spicker (eds.), *Ownership of the Human Body,* 68.

5 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 68.

constitutive element of each person, and not a thing in Roman Law. In continuation with the Roman law, Stoic philosopher Seneca (*Ep.* 95, 33) explains,

> The human being is something sacred, and therefore man/woman has no dominion over his/her body, only disposition. And this disposition must be carried out according to the Greek virtue of *hosiotes* (the Latin *pietas*). This also explains why the human being has a moral (and legal) duty to respect the body, and also why the dead body was considered 'inviolable' and 'unsalable.'[6]

As a whole in the naturalistic approach we find that body is a gift of nature and God. So human being could not destroy it.

2. Modern Criticism to the Naturalistic Approach

The modernist philosophers criticized naturalistic approach. According to them, "the empiric judgements are necessarily made *a posteriori*, the reason why they can only be true when all the possible cases have occurred, what in experience is impossible. Therefore, naturalism's belief in the capacity of knowing absolutely what nature 'is', and to deduce from it known as the 'naturalistic fallacy.'"[7] Against this, philosophers argue that nature could not ground morality. The human being is the true subject of rights and duties. For instance, John Locke writes, "every man is his own lord. Therefore, the body is the first and most important property of human beings, and also the means of acquiring all other things."[8] Here the human being is not only the administrator of his own body, but at the same time he/she is the proper master and owner of his/her body. The human being is the owner of his or her own will. For example, he/she can take his or her own life away. This view is expressed in the essay by David Hume, *Of Suicide*. He says, "suicide does not have a 'criminal nature', and the laws that consider it a crime

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6 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 69.

7 D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

8 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 71. See also the discussion in Uffe J. Jensen, "Property, Rights, and the Body: The Danish Context," Henk A. M. J. Ten Have, Jos V. M. Welief & Stuart F. Spicker (eds.), *Ownership of the Human Body*, 180.

are wrong."[9] So the organic concept of body changed into a mechanical understanding. Thus body was no longer a sacred incarnation of cosmological truth.[10] Finally, it is argued that the human body is not inviolable, and that the person who wants to dispose of his/her body consciously and voluntarily is not committing a crime.

3. The Kantian Concept

We see a different type of argument in Immanuel Kant. He taught that reason is capable of giving an ultimate basis for morality in a categorical and imperative form. The categorical imperative obliges absolute respect of all human beings, including our proper person. According to him, "our life is entirely conditioned by our body, so that we cannot conceive of a life not mediated by the body, and we cannot make use of our freedom except through the body. The body is the means of realization of our freedom, viz., of our moral duties, and therefore we must respect it."[11]

Moreover, Kant also maintains that even if he/she were benefited ten thousand halers for a single finger, a human being could not sell his/her limb.[12] Here the argument is based on the principle that persons cannot be treated as mere things. Persons are ends in themselves, whereas things can be treated as means.[13]

The result of this reasoning is that man/woman has no property rights over his/her body. Kant deals this in the 'Duties towards the body in respect of sexual impulse.' He writes:

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9 David Hume, "Of Suicide," in Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge (eds.), *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, Vol. IV, (London: Scientia Verlag, Aalen, 1892) 406-414.

10 E. Richard Gold, *Body Parts: Property Rights and the Ownership of Human Biological Materials* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996) 127.

11 Immanuel Kant, *Lecture on Ethics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 147-148 as quoted in Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 72.

12 Immanuel Kant, *Lecture on Ethics*, 124.

13 Immanuel Kant, *Lecture on Ethics*, 124.

Man cannot dispose over himself because he is not a thing; he is not his own property; to say that he is would be self-contradictory; for in so far as he is a person he is a Subject in whom the ownership of things can be vested, and if he were his own property, he would be a thing over which he could have ownership. But a person cannot be a property and so cannot be a thing which can be owned, for it is impossible to be a person and a thing, the proprietor and the property. Accordingly a man is not at his own disposal. He is not entitled to sell a limb, not even one of his own teeth.[14]

The disposal of bodily parts is possible when it is necessary for his/her own self-preservation. For example, amputation of limbs is done in order to restore health and to secure self-preservation. "We may treat our body as we please, provided our motives are those of self-preservation. If, for instance, his foot is a hindrance to life, a man might have it amputated. To preserve his person he has the right of disposal over his body."[15]

The principle about the body was kept by Kant throughout his life. In the second part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, entitled 'The Doctrine of Virtue,' he notes: "To dispose of oneself as a mere means to some end of one's own liking is to degrade the humanity in one's person (homo noumenon), which after all, was entrusted to man (homo phenomenon) to preserve."[16] Kant also writes that

To deprive oneself of an integral part or organ (to mutilate oneself) e.g., to give away or sell a tooth so that it can be planted in the jawbone of another person, or to submit oneself to castration in order to gain an easier livelihood as a singer, and so on, belongs to partial self-murder. But this is not the case with the amputation of a dead organ, or one on the verge of mortification and thus harmful to life. Also, it cannot be reckoned a crime against one's own person to cut

14 Immanuel Kant, *Lecture on Ethics*, 165.

15 Immanuel Kant, *Lecture on Ethics*, 149.

16 Immanuel Kant, "Die Metaphysik de Sitten," in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VI. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1907) 423; Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 73.

off something which is, to be sure, a part, but not an organ of the body, e.g. the hair, although selling one's hair for gain is not entirely free from blame.[17]

To add a point finally, according to Kant, the body is the incarnation of reason. He says the body is 'me,' and it not 'mine'. More clearly, "my body is not a thing, but a 'person' I cannot dispose of."[18] This is the main principle of Kantian doctrine. Its influence in the development of the ethical and legal analysis of western culture has been large in degree. It leads us to understand our unwillingness to speak about the ownership of human bodies.[19] The Kantian view establishes that persons are the owners of their bodies, but considers that his/her ownership does not permit its free violation and alienation. [20]

4. Socialist Philosophy

The core of this approach is that the principal owner of the body is society. This view is introduced by the socialist philosophy. Body is also society's property because body has always two dimensions. They are the following: 1) consumer and producer, which means being private and individual; 2) public and social - this means that the human body is first of all a public and social body, and then it comes as an individual body.[21] In the following paragraphs we will treat these points.

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17 Immanuel Kant, "Die Metaphysik de Sitten," in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VI, 423; Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 73-74.

18 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 74.

19 R. F. Chadwick, "The Market for Bodily Parts: Kant and Duties to Oneself," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 6/2 (1989) 129-139.

20 J. F. Childress, "The Body as Property: Some Philosophical Reflections," *Transplantation Proceedings* 24 (1992) 2144. Kant, a deontologist, autonomy is concerned not with the pursuit of heteronomous desires. But it is acting in accord with the demands of reason imposed by moral law. For Childress, depends upon right making and wrong criteria that are independent of consequences. But he does not endorse a Kantian deontology. Kevin W. Wildes, "Libertarianism and Ownership of the Human Body," 146; Franz J. Illhardt, "Ownership of the Human Body: Deontological Approaches," 194.

21 Henk A.M. J Ten Have & Jos V. M. Welie, "Medicine, Ownership, and the Human Body," in Henk A. M. J. Ten Have, Jos V. M. Welief & Stuart F. Spicker (eds.), *Ownership of the Human Body*, 13.

There is no strict distinction between 'property' and 'person'. From the word 'own' (personal) we form 'owner' (property), and ownership (property).[22] Max Stirner, in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum,* argues against socialism. According to him, property (*Eigentum*) is the ground of that which is proper to each one' (*der Einzige)*, that is to say, of each one's personality. Against this view, Marx and Engels, in their *Die deutsche Ideologie,* challenge the idea of property as ground of personality.[23] They criticise that "what Stirner defends is no different from the most old and trivial bourgeois objections."[24] Marx and Engels also say that the bourgeois always tend to identify personality with private property.

Against the thought of Marx, Alfered Kurella writes in his book, *Das Eigne und das Fremde,*

> Socialism tries to do exactly the opposite, turn the alien into one's own (das Fremde als Eigenes). This can only be achieved by socializing the property of the means of production, in which we stress human work, the human body. The body as the peculiarity of being at the same time a good of consumption and a good of production. Because of the first quality, it has 'private' and 'individual' character; due to its second, it is 'public and 'social.'[25]

But, Louis Blanc's famous phrase, quoted by Marx in *Critique of the Gotha program,* expresses the idea that human body is public. This reads as follows: "from each according to his capacity; to each according to his necessities, we could state that the public dimension of the body is its 'capacities', and the private one its necessities. As everything related with health belongs to the first of these fields, we have to conclude that

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22 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 74.

23 Bryan S. Turner observes that "in Marxism, the body is both the vehicle and the site of labour; it exists but it is constantly transformed by human agency." Cf. Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society*, 5; Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 74.

24 Marx, K. & Engels F, "Die Deutsche Ideologie," in Marx-Engels, *Werke*, Vol. III (Berlin: Dietz, 1969) as quoted in Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 74.

25 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 75.

the human body is not only private property, but society's property."[26] Additionally, understanding the human body as "private property" and the right to privacy is the prime element of 'alienation' or depersonalization' of the human being. The personalization of the human body begins with the acknowledgement of its essential public and social dimension. The human body must have first a public and social dimension, which is against the view of the absolutization of the right to privacy defended by the liberal movement.[27] So the main argument is that the ethics of the human body, for Marx primarily, is not individual but social. Thus society has right over the human body.

5. Christian Approach

In the opinion of Ola Sigurdson, one could not find a detailed doctrinal reflection on human body in the Christian tradition. According to him, "there is no somatology as there is an ecclesiology or eschatology, but rather, somatology would be a part of anthropology and/or Christology."[28] But Christian understanding of body is clear from the scripture and the teachings of theologians. In Christian view, human being does not have absolute dominion over his/her own body, and over the body of his/her neighbour.

In the bible, body denotes the whole of a man's/woman's being and relationship. The Scripture clearly speaks that body belongs to God (1Cor 6:19, 20). He created us in his image and likeness (Gen 1: 27) and Jesus died to redeem us. Since body belongs to God, we have to present our body as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). Human being has no right to defile his/her body (1Cor 3:16). Moreover, God is the owner and we are the stewards of God. In another sense, God makes human being his co-worker in administrating his life (1Cor 3:9). Stewardship means that human beings do not have the right over themselves. We are the custodians of that which belong to God.[29]

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26 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 75.

27 Diego Gracia, "Ownership of the Human Body: Some Historical Remarks," 75.

28 Ola Sigurdson, "How to speak of the body? Embodiment between phenomenology and theology," *Studia Theologica* 62 (2008) 25-43, 30.

29 http://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-stewardship.html (accessed on 17-10-2012).

The concept of ownership of body is very much discussed by the Fathers of the Church and medieval theologians. We follow the view of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas because traditional moral theologians repeated mainly their views. According to St. Augustine, man/woman has no right to kill himself/herself. He says:

> For likewise, if it is not licit by private right for a man to kill even a wicked person when no law concedes the permission for the killing of such a one; evidently likewise, he who kills himself is a homicide: and he is so much the guiltier of his own death, as he was more innocent of that offense of which he doomed himself to die.[30]

Augustine evaluates the commandment which forbids the taking of life. For him, in the Scripture we never see a divine precept or permission that we may inflict death on ourselves for the sake of getting immortality itself. We could not do so because we are prohibited by the divine law "thou shall not kill."[31] Augustine's basic principle is that a person is not permitted to take his/her own life because of the general tone of the commandment. Besides, in the opinion of St. Thomas,

> Life is the greatest temporal good and the condition of all other goods, not only natural but also supernatural: it is the condition of merit for eternal life, the condition of progress and evolution in the moral and spiritual life; hence, he who kills himself acts contrary to self-love and contrary to natural inclination, for every being tends to its own conservation.[32]

The above mentioned arguments depict that man/woman does not have absolute domain over his/her body. He/she is not the owner of the body.

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30 Augustine., *De Civitate Dei*, Liber Primus, Cap. XVII, PL 41, 30. As quoted in Bert Cunningham, 19

31 Augustine., *De Civitate Dei*, Liber Primus, Cap. XX, PL 41, 34. As quoted in Bert Cunningham, 20.

32 Benedict Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae* Moralis (Paris: 1938) Vol. II, n.350, 1,a, Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 64, art. 5. English translation is taken from Bert Cunningham, *The Morality of Organ Transplantation*, Studies in Sacred Theology 86 (Washington: Catholic University of America press, 1944) 27.

Moreover, the concept of the ownership of the human body is clear in the documents of the Church. Church presents it in relation to the teaching of human life,[33] which we can summarize as follows: 1) Human being is created in the image of God (CCC no. 357; GS 14, *Dignitas Personae*, 7). 2) The Human person is a unified whole. This means that he/she is corporeal and spiritual. This expresses the unity of body and soul relationship (CCC no. 362, GS 14). 3) The human person is the way of the Church. John Paul II, in *Redemptor Hominis* (no. 14) explains, "man is the primary route which the Church must travel in fulfilling its mission. He is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself." 4) Human life is based on fundamental principles and values. We have to understand it from different perspectives. God is the origin of life (*EV* 24, 46, 55). Human Life is a gift from God (*Declaration on Procured Abortion* no. 5; *Declaration on Euthanasia* no. 155; *Familiaris Consortio* no. 30; *Evangelium Vitae* no. 39, 40, 52, 81, 84, 92). Human life is a sacred reality (Gen 2: 7; CCC no. 64; *Mater et Magistra* no. 194; *Humane Vitae* no. 13; *EV* no. 2). Sacredness leads to inviolability *(Evangelium Vitae* no. 53). Life is a fundamental right (*Pacem in Terris* no. 11; *Declaration on Abortion* no. 11, 12; *Evangelium Vitae* no. 57, 71, 90, 20, 72, 11, 18, 101; CCC no. 2273). Human life is a fundamental value (GS no. 22; *Declaration on Procured abortion* no. 1; *Evangelium Vitae* no. 5, 11, 2, 25, 34, 71, 55, 101). In short, the documents of the church underline that "the dignity of a person must be recognized in every human being from conception to natural death."[34] This leads to the conclusion that God is the owner of human body and human life.

Conclusion

We have discussed in this paper the different approaches of the ownership of the human body. We cannot agree with the two approaches that attribute ownership of body to the individual and the society. When individuals are the owners of the human body, they can use the body for

33 Scaria Kanniyakonil, *The Fundamentals of Bioethics: Legal Perspective and Ethical Approaches* (Kottayam: OIRSI, 2007) 255.

34 Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Instruction Dignitas Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions*, 8 September, 2008 (Vatican: 2008) 1.

any purpose. In this context, they can justify suicide, euthanasia, and paid organ donation out of individual freedom. Moreover, society has no right over the ownership of the body. Society is bound to respect the genuine consent of the person. Hence, we favour the Christian approach. This approach considers God as the immediate superior of human person. There is no creature higher than man/woman in the order of creation. Life is subject to God only because He only can give it. No creature can be master of itself. The gift of life is given to human being for the ultimate attainment of eternal life with God. Finally, the Christian approach to the ownership of human body respects, protects, and serves each and every one in his/her integrity.

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God-Centered Approach to Creation:
A Need of the Hour

Prem Xalxo

One of the ways by which some of the ancient cultures tried to preserve nature was to attach divine attributes to nature. Thus nature was revered and venerated. But in monotheistic terms, it was pantheism. Christianity in its theological endeavors carefully distinguished between the Creator and creatures. While desacralizing nature, theology seems to have emptied nature of the traces of divine presence . It was left as a material for human use. But under the pressure of current environmental crisis, there are attempts which hold that creation is body of God, as done by Sallie McFague. Differing from such attempts, in this essay, Prem Xalxo S.J. presents a God centred approach to nature. The author serves as professor of moral theology at the Gregorian University, Rome.

Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for he commanded and they were created;
he established them forever and ever;
he gave them a duty which shall not pass away (Ps 148:3-6)

In the face of the current ecological concerns visible in various forms as pollution of land, water and air, growing scarcity of water, global

warming and climate change, Psalm 148 guides the way to reflect and to contemplate the goodness of God's creation in a sense of awe and wonder with songs of praise in union with the entire creation. By allowing pollution, resource exhaustion, and the annual extinction of thousands of species to fray the delicate tissue of life, we undermine the beauty, integrity and harmony of God's creation and also abort "the hidden potential for a larger and wider-than-human future creativity that still lurks in the folds of the earth's ecosystem." [1] On 11 October 2012, Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated the Year of Faith, which coincided with the beginning of the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962. At the commencement of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII had called everyone to read the signs of the times. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, states, "All times, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." [2] Ecological concerns are the present signs of the times which indicate our responsibility toward creation and to act reasonably to address those concerns. They are the signs of the times to re-evaluate our relationship with the entire creation and search for God's divine will in creation which intended our responsibility to care and to cultivate the earth (cf. Gen 2:15). As Christians, we are invited to reflect on the truth that our responsibility within creation and our duty towards every creature and the Creator are an essential part of our faith. [3]

The classic modern science has viewed creation as "a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless, merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly." [4] Our faith teaches us that the creation is not a dull affair;

1 JOHN F. HAUGHT, "Ecology and Eschatology" in DREW CHRISTIANSEN – WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment*, United States Catholic Conference, Washington D.C.2006, 59.

2 *Gaudium et spes*, n° 4.

3 Cf. THE AUSTRALIAN BISHOPS' COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, "Christians and Their DutyTowards Nature" in DREW CHRISTIANSEN – WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good"* 248.

4 ALFRED N. WHITEHEAD, *Science and the Modern World*, McMillan, New York 1926, 80; see also, DAVID TOOLAN, "The Voice of the Hurricane: Cosmology and a Catholic Theology of Nature" in DREW CHRISTIANSEN –WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good,"* 77.

it has a profound meaning and value to us human beings as well as to the Creator of everything. During every Eucharistic celebration, we proclaim with joy, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory", because the Creator of heaven and earth is worth of praise and glory of his wonderful creation. Lynn White, Jr., who had stated already in 1967 that the Christianity bears "an immense burden of guilt" for the present ecological concerns, had also underlined that we can search for the possible and appropriate answers to such concerns by going back to our faith, "Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not."[5] And therefore, ecological concerns must be seen and addressed from the perspective of what it means to be religious, to be people of faith. In this direction, the Church, as the community of the believers, has a special responsibility to teach that all forms of life in creation are linked together, vulnerable to each other's actions and responsible for each other's lives. She has "a special credibility in this area, because in her own history she has demonstrated (albeit imperfectly) that interconnectedness in her ability to link people of many different cultures into a single communion"[6]. God-centered approach to creation invites people of all faiths to respect and reverence creation as a pathway to union with God.

God's Presence in Creation

God is infinitely greater than all his works: "You have set your glory above the heavens". Indeed, God's "greatness is unsearchable". But because he is the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures' inmost being: "In him

5 LYNN WHITE, JR., "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", in MARY H. MACKINNON – MONI MCINTYRE,ed., *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City 1995, 34. The article was first published in Science 155 (1967) 1203-1207.

6 MARY EVELYN JEGEN, "The Church's Role in Healing the Earth" in WESLEY GRANBERG-MICHAEL, ed., T*ending the Garden*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1987, 104.

we live and move and have our being". In the words of St. Augustine, God is "higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self"[7].

On 4 July 2012, the CMS (Comact Muon Solenoid) and the ATLAS (A Toroidal LHC Apparatus) experimental teams at the Large Hadron Collider independently confirmed the discovery of a previously unknown boson, popularly known as God particle. After the announcement of the discovery, Philippe Di Stefano, a physics professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario remarked, "It's helping us understand the big universal question, which is what are we made out of."[8] Baptizing the newly discovered boson particle as God particle may not have any scientific implications; but the name itself provokes a certain degree of curiosity and interest in search for God's presence in every minute particle of creation.

Creation, as God's handiwork, has long been a vital source of spiritual enrichment for vast number of people over the years. For centuries, monks, seers and holy men have contemplated the presence of God in and through creation. According to the book of Genesis, God created everything on the face of the earth and the entire universe according to his divine will and plan. A situation of chaos existed before God decided to bring everything into being, "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters" (Gen 1:1-2). Then God says, "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3) and the light comes into existence out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo). The Catechism of the Catholic Church* underlines that "Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator. The world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature, and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted and time begun."[9] He created human beings in his image and likeness and settles them in the garden of Eden to cultivate

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7 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n° 300.

8 http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2012/07/04/f-god-particle-higgs-boson.html (30/10/2012).

9 Catechism of the Catholic Church, n° 338

and care for it (cf. Gen 2:15). He, thus, manifests his design and will for the entire creation, and thus it becomes the abode of God's presence and a means to reach him in faith.

Stephen Hawking, the author of the famous book *A Brief History of Time,* once said, "So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be. What place, then, for a creator?"[10] Hawking viewed the universe through the scientific lens sans any element of faith which negates the existence of a Creator God. However, the belief that everything is created by God, and the entire creation is oriented toward future fulfillment in and through Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christian faith. Walter Kasper maintains that "[...] biblical faith in creation constitutes part of the spiritual presuppositions of the modern natural sciences and of the technological development that they have made possible, since it was the biblical distinction between Creator and creature which demythologized the world and saw it as God's creation."[11] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit, philosopher and paleontologist, put Jesus as the focal point of creation terming him as the Alfa and Omega point of the creative process. According to him, in and through Jesus everything comes into existence and to him everything culminates. Thus, Jesus is present at every moment of the creative process of creation. Praising the cosmic fullness of Jesus, he had exclaimed, "I love you as a world, as the world which has captured my heart, and it is you, I now realize, whom men and women, my brothers and sisters, even those who do not believe, serve and seek throughout the magic immensities of the cosmos."[12] Indeed, Creation is a symphony of praise, because it is the abode of God's presence.

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10 STEPHEN HAWKING, A *Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes,* Bantam Books, New York 1988,141.

11 WALTER KASPER, "La sfida ecologica alla teolgia" in A. CAPRIOLI – L. VACCARO, ed., *Questione ecologica e coscienza cristiana,* Morcelliana, Brescia 1988, 134.

12 Cit. in WENDY M. WRIGHT, *Sacred Heart: Gateway to God,* Darton, Longmand & Todd, London 2002, 22.Teilhard de Chardin was reprimanded by the Holy See for some of his ideas, which were in conflict with the magisterial teachings of the Church. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI had words of praise for his idea of the universe as a "living host".

The whole creation reveals God's dwelling presence by visible and tangible signs. The diversity of life in creation manifests God's glory and majesty. A prayerful contemplation of the beauty and richness of creation helps us to raise our hearts and minds to God the Creator and reminds us that he is not far from any of us. The Acts of the Apostles reflects the presence and closeness of God to us and to his creation in the following words, "He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:26-27).

Our faith in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh and dwelt amongst us, shows that God is both immanent and transcendent in creation, that is, he is present and active in everything he has created, he continues to give life and sustains everything in creation, and at the same time, he is above and independent of his creation. He is present to his creation which "lives and moves and has its being"[13] in God; and at the same time, he is distinct from the created world, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts" (Is 55:8-9).

The vision of God in all creation and all creation in God finds a vivid presentation in the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. In the process of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius invites those who make Spiritual Exercises to wonder how the entire creation supports human beings, and does not destroy them despite the fact of their sin. The concluding contemplation of the month-long Spiritual Exercises is Contemplation to Attain Love, which consists in contemplating prayerfully "how God dwells in creatures, in the elements, giving them being, in the plants vegetating, in the animals feeling in them, in men giving them to understand: and so in me, giving me being, animating me, giving me sensation and making me to understand; likewise making a temple of me, being created to the likeness and image of His Divine Majesty."[14] He

13 JOHN HART, *What are they saying about Environmental Theology*.? Paulist Press, New York – Mahwah 2004, 102; see also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n° 299.

14 *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, n° 235.

had written to St. Francis Borgia, one of his early companions, "The fullness of our eternal God dwells in all created things, giving them being and keeping them in existence with his being and presence."[15] From the point of view of God's presence in creation, the ecological concerns seem to be properly contrary to his design of creation, which is visibly plundered, with its beauty and integrity being destroyed, and its order being altered to satisfy the unquenchable human greed for more and better. Creation was willed by God and hence, every human folly against creation is an act against God's will. The abuse and misuse of creation, thus, is the rejection of God's presence in his creation. What is needed today is to sing aloud the praises of God and celebrate his presence in creation as we sing the *Exultet* hymn on the Easter Vigil, "Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of Angels! Exult, all creation around God's throne!"

Creation Renewed and Reconciled to God in Jesus Christ

The epilogue of St. John's Gospel describes the preeminence of Jesus Christ in creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:1-5).

The epilogue presents a panoramic view of the presence of the Word right from the beginning of creation, which sets aside the chaos, brings everything into existence and thus, establishes order and harmony in creation. The creation account in the Book of Genesis indicates that before the Fall of Adam and Eve, there was order and harmony in creation, "God looked at everything he had made and he found it very good" (Gen 1:31). With the deliberate disobedience of Adam and Eve to God, sin enters into the world and corrupts everything that was good. Adam and

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15 Cit. in EDWARD P. ECHLIN, *The Cosmic Circle*, The Columbia Press, Dublin 2004, 152.

Eve became aliens to God, their Creator and their interpersonal relationship too is ruptured. Apart from that, the beauty, harmony and integrity of creation is destroyed. The earth is cursed because of them, which must now be tilled and harvested through painful toil. Despite all their toil, the earth "will provide thistles" for them.[16] The fallen human race along with the entire creation is renewed and reconciled to God in and through Jesus Christ.

St. Paul writes in his letter to Colossians, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col 1:15-17). In the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians too, awareness of the universality of salvation in and through Christ leads to the insight that "in him all things were created" (Eph 1:9ff; Col 1:15ff).[17] Jürgen Moltmann emphasizes that if Jesus Christ is "the ground of salvation for the whole creation, for sinful men and women, and for 'enslaved' non-human creatures, he is then also the ground for the existence of the whole creation, human beings and nature alike."[18] Indeed, by taking the human form and dwelling amongst us, he made visible the invisible God. In and through him, God came to dwell amidst us and made known his will to us, "[…] he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth" (Eph 1:9-10).

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, has redeemed and sanctified the entire creation through his presence; filled the earth with grace and glory of God. Edward P. Echlin notes that "the living earth, where Jesus walked, reconciling all to God, is itself a grace, an amazing grace." [19]

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16 WILLIAM DRYNESS, "Stewardship of Earth in the Old Testament" in WESLEY GRANBERG-MICHAEL, ed., *Tending the Garden*, 56.

17 JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, SCM Press Ltd., London 1985, 95.

18 JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, *God in Creation*, 94.

19 EDWARD P. ECHLIN, *The Cosmic Circle*, The Columbia Press, Dublin 2004, 91.

The central theme of the preaching of Jesus is the coming of God's Kingdom and fulfillmen of his will on earth as it is in heaven, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt 4:17). It is evident from the earthly life and the teachings of Jesus that he had a close understanding of creation, its productivity and the cycle of seasons. He was born in a manger surrounded by the animals. The parables told by Jesus often referred to birds, seeds, crops, trees and harvests. He illustrated his parables by referring to the lilies of the field, (Lk 12:27), the birds of the sky (Mt 6:26), the vine and the branches (Jn 15:1-17), the sower and the seed (Mt 13:3-9; 18-23). He was sensitive "to the changing seasons, seeds, soil, growth, harvest, and the treasure of the local rural wisdom about working with a local biosystem" [20]. His use of various images and metaphors related to creation in his teaching of the coming of the Kingdom of heaven demonstrates his sensitivity to creation, who ultimately gives his spirit to renew the whole earth (cf., Col 2:18; Ps 104:30). In him, the original creation (*creatio originalis*) continues now (*creatio continua*) and will be brought to fulfillment in and through him in the future (*creatio nova*).[21]

The Resurrection of Jesus shows that the Risen Lord is even more deeply centered in all creation. The preface for the Mass of Easter Day rejoices in the fact that the resurrection "renews all creation." Every living creature on earth is renewed in the Risen Lord and has a profound relationship with him. Sean McDonagh firmly emphasizes that the loving touch of the Risen Lord heals our brokenness and fulfills all creation. And so, "to wantonly destroy any aspect of creation or to banish species for ever from their place in the community of life is to deface the image of Christ which is radiated throughout our world"[22]. We, as Christians, having accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, have the mandate (Mt 28:18-20), duty and responsibility to carry on the healing mission initiated and accomplished by him.

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20 EDWARD P. ECHLIN, The Cosmic Circle, 95.

21 JOHN F. HAUGHT, "Ecology and Eschatology," 50.

22 SEAN MCDONAGH, *Passion for the Earth*, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1994, 143.

Stewardship

On 1 January 1990, Pope John Paul II, in his Message for the World Day of Peace, invited people of all faith to carry out their responsibility of taking care of creation. He insisted that "Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."[23] Our faith in Jesus Christ obliges us to be the stewards and caretakers of creation by our reasonable and responsible care in healing, restoring, regenerating and conserving the beauty, harmony and integrity of God's creation through his grace.

Understanding of stewardship "promotes a sense of human responsibility to a creation primarily related to and in service to God, which offers signs of the Creator who brought it into being; the experience of a relational consciousness enables people to regards other members of the biotic community as relatives, or as essential strands of a common web of life."[24] Stewardship has an obvious biblical connotation and significance. According to the Book of Genesis, "The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it" (Gen 2:15). This particular verse is often used to indicate the human responsibility of taking care of creation as stewards. Protection and care of the creation as stewards is a truly classic case of the common good, which calls for a sense of interrelatedness, interconnectedness and interdependence with all forms of life in creation. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* rightly insists that it is God who "wills the interdependence of creatures. The cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tell us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other."[25] By being true and faithful stewards, we can genuinely feel at home in creation with other forms of life. In the sense in which we can

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23 JOHNPAUL II, Message for the World Day of Peace, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation,* n° 15.

24 JOHN HART, *What are they saying about Environmental Theology?*, 125.

25 *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* n° 340.

26 MILTON MAYEROFF, *On Caring*, Harper & Row, New York 1971, 2.

ever be said to be at home in the world "not through dominating, or explaining, or appreciating, but through caring and being cared for."[26] In their Pastoral Statement *Renewing the Earth*, the American Bishops have stated, "Our Christian way of life, as saints like Benedict, Hildegard, and St. Francis showed us, is a road to community with all creation."[27]

Our faith in Jesus Christ also teaches us the profound meaning of being the stewards of creation by giving us the example of Adam and Eve who were given the mandate to cultivate and care for creation (Gen 2:15). In his Message for the World Day of Peace, Pope John Paul II said,

> "Adam and Eve's call to share in the unfolding of God's plan of creation brought into play those abilities and gifts which distinguish the human being from all other creatures. At the same time, their call established a fixed relationship between mankind and the rest of creation. Made in the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve were to have exercised their dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) with wisdom and love. Instead, they destroyed the existing harmony *by deliberately going against the Creator's plan*, that is, by choosing to sin."[28]

The words of John Paul II indicates that stewardship implies that we must both care for creation "according to the standards that are not of our own making and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. [...] Even as we rejoice in earth's goodness and in the beauty of nature, stewardship places upon us responsibility for the wellbeing of all God's creation."[29] We have the responsibility to take care of creation, because for us "to advance by eliminating, degrading or poisoning other life systems is not only to diminish the grandeur of earthly

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27 UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, "Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on the Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching" DREW CHRISTIANSEN – WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good,"* 230.

28 JOHN PAUL II, Message for the World Day of Peace, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*, n° 3.

29 UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, "Renewing the Earth," 231-232.

existence, but also to diminish the chance for human survival in any acceptable mode of fulfillment."[30] Having been created in the image and likeness of God, we have the knowledge, ability, creativity and integrity to make the best use of God's gift by being its stewards. Therefore, being the stewards of creation to care, preserve and protect its harmony and integrity is not an optional attitude or activity, but a responsibility arising out of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Word through whom all things came to be (Jn 1:3).

Sacramentality of Creation

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the seven sacraments as "the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ, the head throughout the Church which is his body."[31] Kevin W. Irwin underlines that these experiences of grace and worship of the Triune God themselves derive from a prior knowledge of creation as sacrament.[32] For us Christians, salvation is experienced and expressed in and through the celebrations of the liturgy and the seven Sacraments.[33] Indeed, "our liturgy and spiritual traditions must point toward a respect for creation and a view of creation as sacramental, revealing the presence of God."[34] The Sacred Scripture affirms the presence and indwelling of God in creation, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19:1). Therefore, in a certain analogous and limited sense, as one of the signs and efficacious means to reach God and to experience his presence, creation can be termed as a sacrament.

30 THOMAS BERRY, *The Dream of the Earth*, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco 1988,66.

31 *CCC*, n° 774.

32 KEVIN W. IRWIN, "The Sacramentality of Creation and the Role of Creation in Liturgy and Sacraments" in KEVIN W. IRWIN – E.D. PELLEGRINO, ed., *Preserving the Creation: Environmental Theology and Ethics*, Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C. 1994, 80.

33 PREM XALXO, *Current Ecological Crisis and Its Moral Dimension*, Xavier Publications, Ranchi 2008, 218.

34 DREW CHRISTIANSEN – WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good,"* 5.

The Christian vision of a sacramental universe – a world that discloses the Creator's presence by visible and tangible signs – can contribute to making the earth a home for the human family once again.35 Pope John Paul II, in his Message for the World Day of Peace, called people of all faith to respect and protect the environment, because creation offers an adequate platform to contemplate the mystery of God's goodness, greatness and love for his people, "[...] *the aesthetic value of creation cannot be overlooked.* Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God (cf. *Gen* 1:4ff; Ps 8:2; 104:1ff; *Wis* 13:3-5; Sir 39:16, 33; 43:1, 9)."36 We have already discussed the goodness of God's creation, that is, everything created by God is good. If we contemplate God's indwelling in creation, every aspect of creation could lead us to God. If understood and used properly, they can become "*sacramenta*, symbols that reveal the goodness and beauty of the Creator."37 In figurative terms, Wendell Berry describes the deeper significance of creation as a sacrament by being responsible stewards of God's creation, "To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, and reverently, it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily and destructively, it is a desecration. In such a desecration, we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness and others to want."38 His words resonates the inner longing of all those who live their faith in Jesus Christ and strive to grow in faith by "finding God in everything". The ultimate implication of the sacramentality of creation is the invitation to care and cultivate creation, to preserve its order and integrity and make responsible use of everything in creation as God's gift for the entire humanity.

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35 UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE, "Renewing the Earth," 231.

36 JOHN PAUL II, Message for World Day of Peace, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*, n° 14.

37 PAUL WEIGAND, "Escape the from the Birdbath: A Reinterpretation of St. Francis as a Model of the Ecological Movement" in PHILIP N. JORANSON, ed., *Cry of the Environment*, Bear and Co., Santa Fe, 1984, 148-157.

38 WENDELL BERRY, *The Gift of Good Land*, North Point Press, San Francisco 1981,281.

God-centered approach to creation helps us to be aware of the goodness of creation, as it is narrated in the Book of Genesis, "God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:31). It is our duty and responsibility to preserve the beauty, integrity and diversity of creation. Scripture and traditions actually prompt us to respect creation and to care for it, which is necessary for human survival and continuity of human race. Ecological concerns will be taken seriously as a matter of faith "only if Catholics and other faith communities see this concern as deeply rooted in Scripture and theology, spirituality and worship, moral and ethical norms."[39] The beauty, vitality and creativity of creation invites us to reflect on the infinite beauty and wisdom of the Creator and thereby, to care and respect for the sake of its future in God the Creator himself. Contemplating the goodness of God's creation, our Christian faith should be tested by our care and concern of its beauty, integrity and diversity.

While discussing the role of faith in promoting the sense of care and respect for creation, it is imperative to mention that religion has been often used to sanction dominion over the planet earth, "[...] some Christian societies have regarded destruction of nature as a divine mission." [40] Lynn White, Jr., had accused that Christianity bears "an immense burden of guilt" for the present ecological crisis; however, it is also suggested that the real culprits were the ancient Romans who, with their business-oriented mentality "translated the anthropocentric idea of Greek thought into practice and laid the basis for the attitude of dominion and possession which is still so rooted in Western culture today."[41] Our faith with God-centered approach to creation has immense potential of showing the way to an interconnected and interrelated relationship with other forms of life in creation. The entire creation "needs to be experienced as the

39 DREW CHRISTIANSEN – WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good,"* 6.

40 EUGENE N. ANDERSON, *Ecologies of the Heart*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1996, 168.

41 Cf. PAUL HAFFNER, *Towards a Theology of the Environment*, Gracewing, Leominster 2008, 191.

42 THOMAS BERRY, *The Dream of the Earth*, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco 1988, 120.

primary mode of divine presence. [...] The basic spirituality communicated by the natural world can also be considered as normative for the future ecological age."[42] Although some extreme secularist exponents reject the Christian perspective altogether, what is needed today is indeed a mentality change, a conversion from within human heart, which accepts the value of every other form of life in creation.

In their *Declaration on the Environment* (Rome – Venice, 10 June 2012), Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople made their vision very clear on the present need of hour by stating, "Almighty God envisioned a world of beauty and harmony, and He created it, making every part an expression of His freedom, wisdom and love (cf. Gen 1:1-25). They also underlined that "what is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is moral and spiritual. [...[A genuine conversion in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act." God-centered approach to creation is an invitation to recognize our interdependence and interrelatedness with each other and all creation – we are integrated and interrelated as a human family and as children of God with the entire creation. If we have such realization through the grace of God the creator, we will be able to walk with the Spirit and work with the Spirit toward a new heaven and a new Earth, in which there truly would be peace with the Spirit Creator and peace with all creation. [43] Finally, we have to assimilate deep in our hearts that "without the sustaining resources that come from a deep prayer and spiritual life, we will be unable to integrate concern for creation into our faith life." [44] And that is the need of the hour, today.

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43 JOHN HART, *What are they saying about Environmental Theology?*, Paulist Press, New York – Mahwah 2004,142.

44 DREW CHRISTIANSEN – WALTER GRAZER, ed., *"And God Saw That It Was Good": Catholic Theology and the Environment*, 11.

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